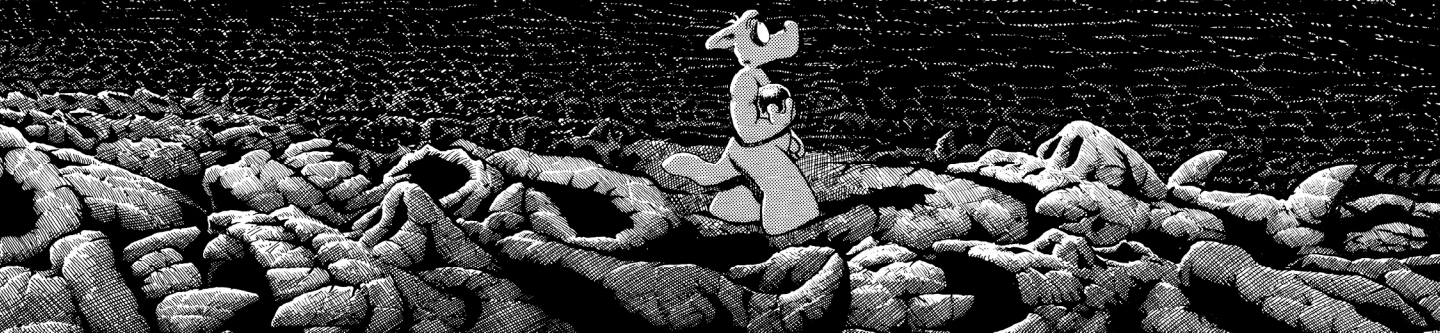


REMASTERED EDITION

Church State

volume II

DAVE SIM & GERHARD



CHURCH AND STATE

by

Dave Sim
&
Gerhard

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Dave's dedication:
to
Marilyn Monroe
because that Monday
press conference
would've been
a pip

Gerhard's dedication:
to Dave
(can you dedicate a book
to its author?)

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6,000 Words on the Restored Church & State II x

Hey—don't let me stop you.

Dave Sim
June 24, 1988
Kitchener, Ontario

BOOK FOUR
The Sacred Wars

becoming
synonymous
WITH
something
inexpressible





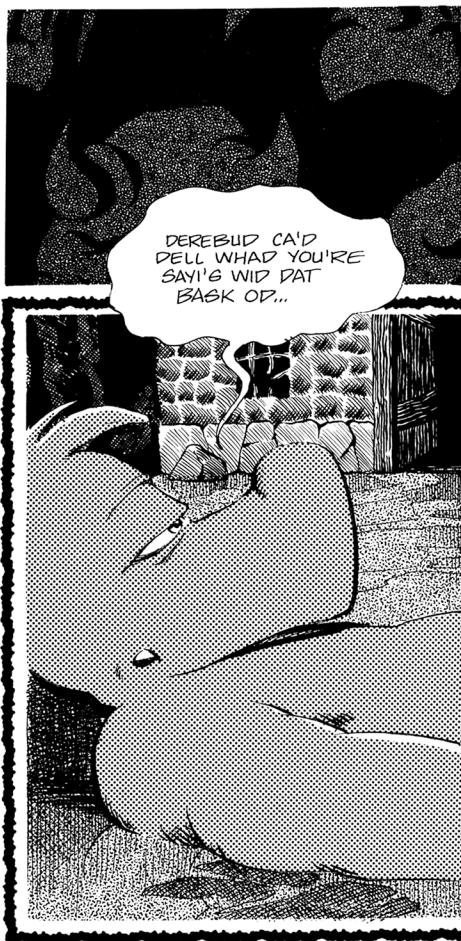
MUFFAWUM
MAFUF...POF
FUM OFF?

FAFUMF
...
FA FUMMA
FUM!

THA

POK THA POK THA POK THA POK

FO, FIFIFIN! YOU
FEFY FA FALFE
FOFE!



DEREBUD CA'D
DELL WHAD YOU'RE
SAYIN' WID DAT
BASK OD...



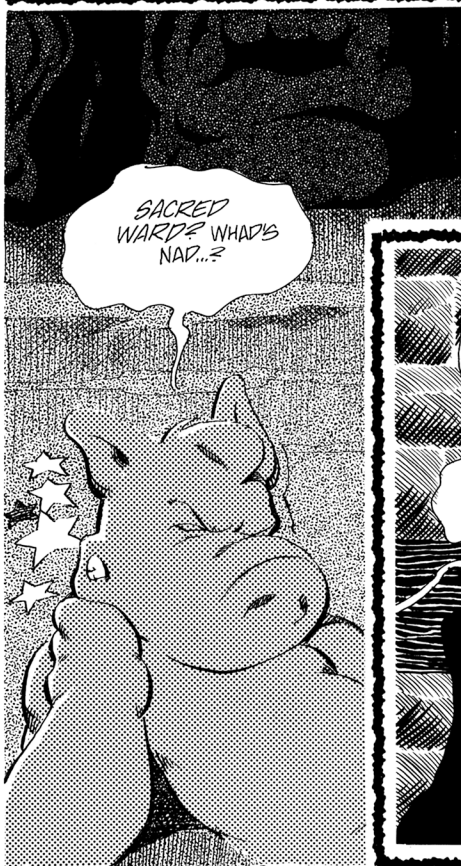
FORRY...



I SAID "SO,
CITIZEN, YOU
DEFY THE
FALSE POPE"
...

YOU'RE ONE
OF US NOW--A
SOLDIER IN THE
SACRED WARS
...

THA
POK
THA
POK



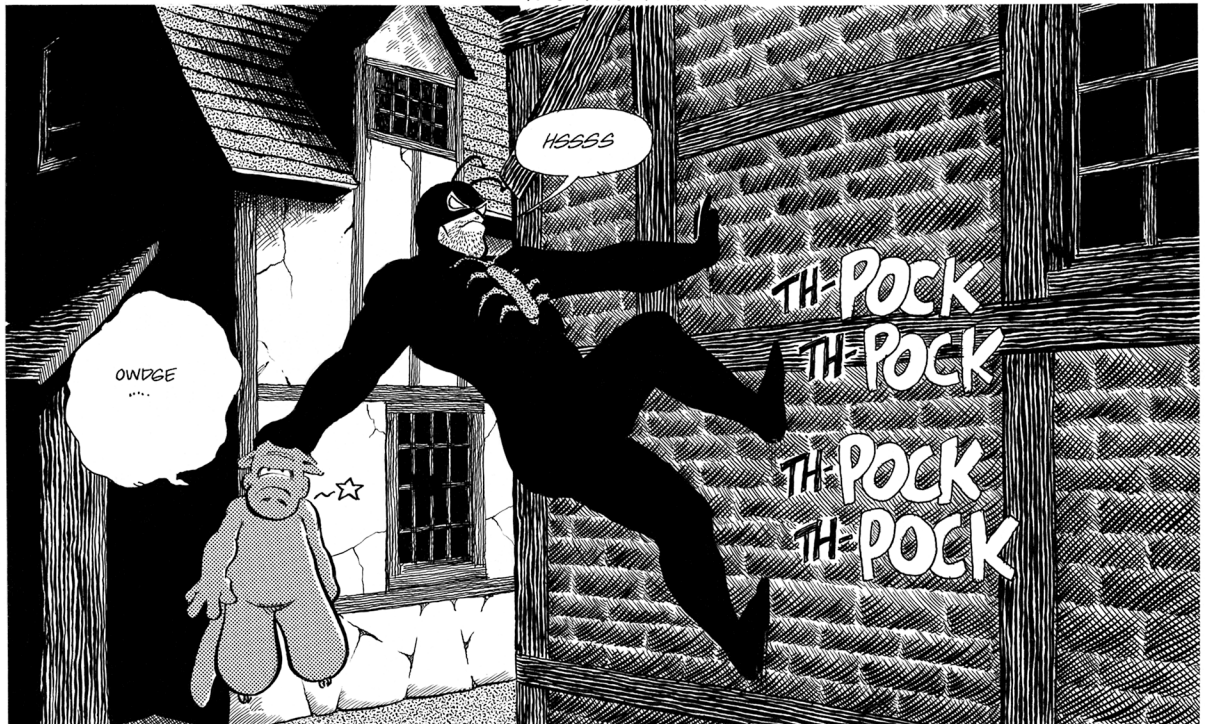
SACRED
WARDE WHAD'S
NAD...?

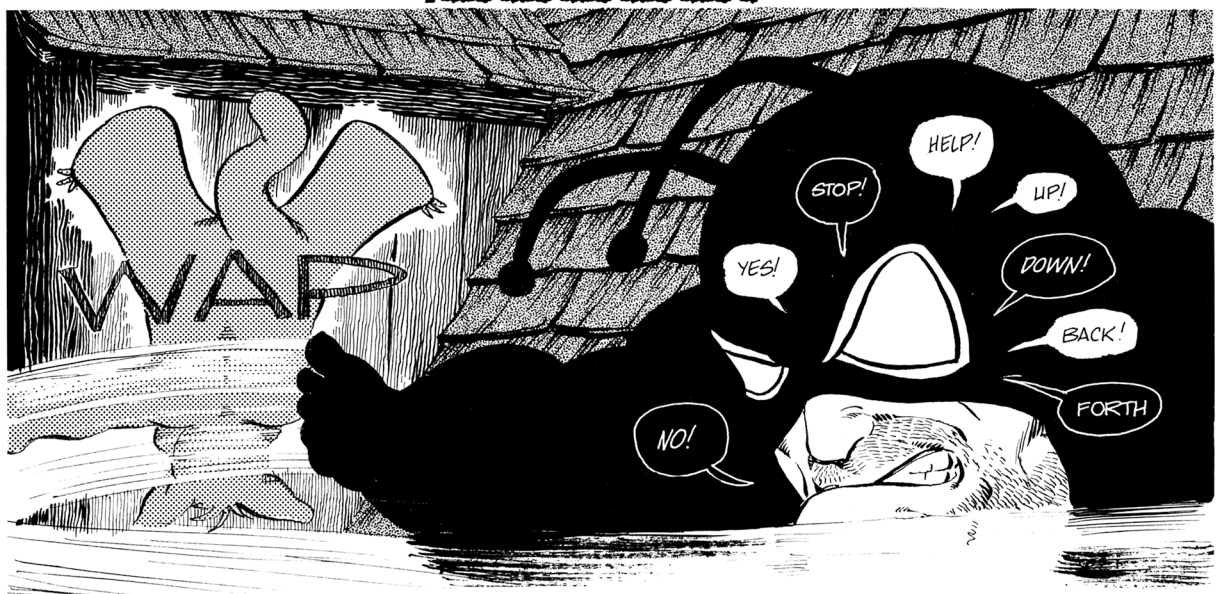
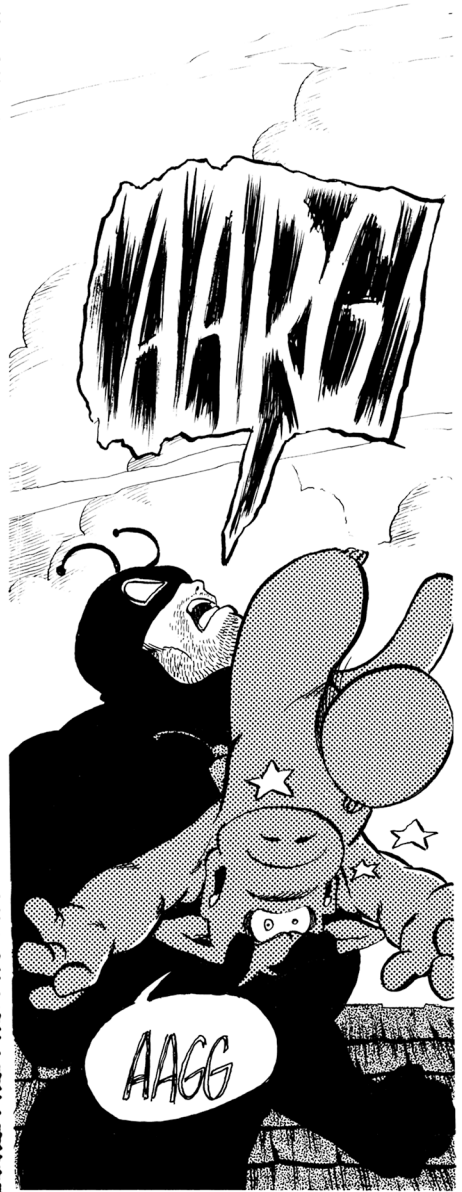


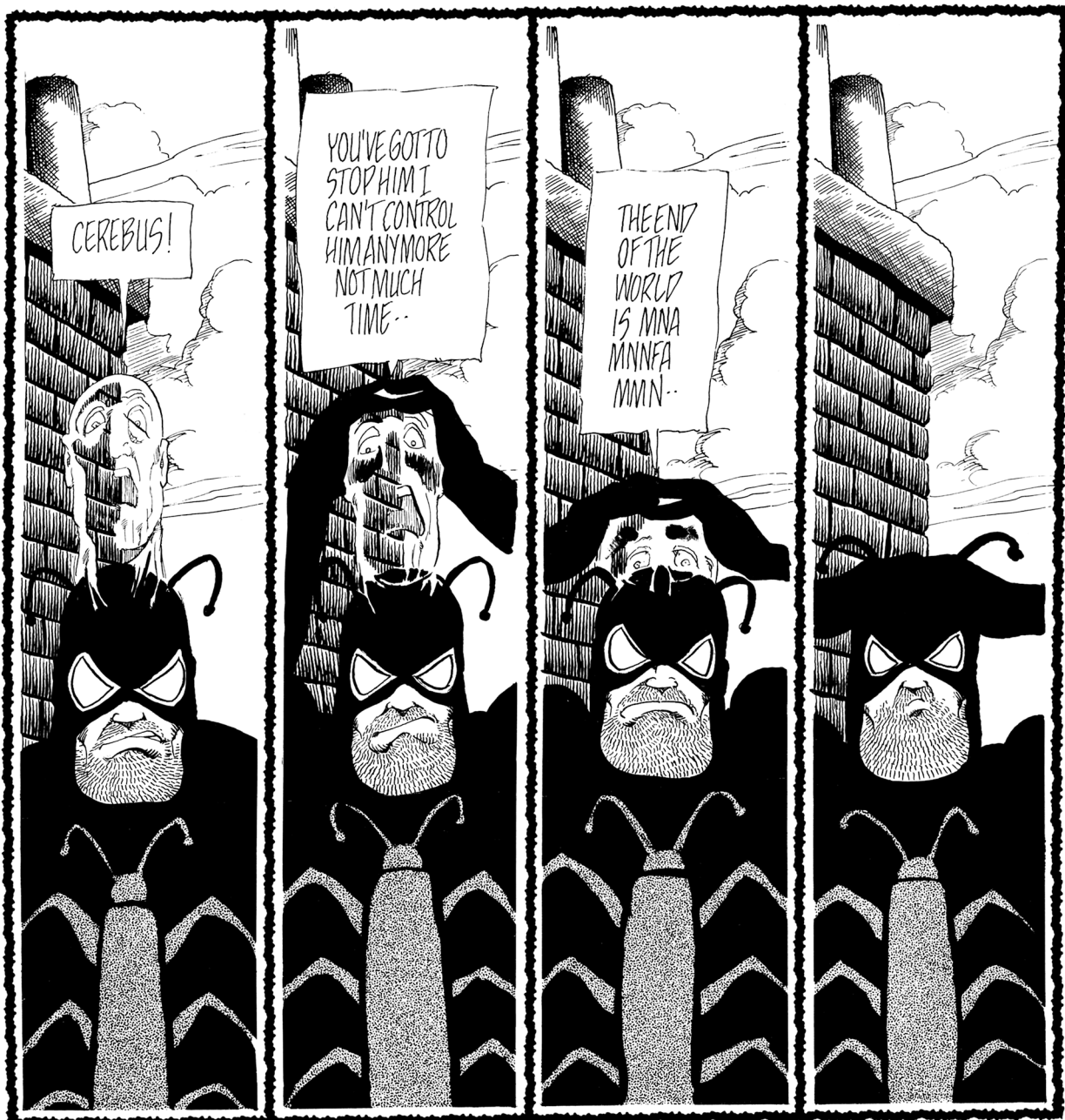
I CAN'T
TELL YOU
THAT
...

WHY
DOT?

THEY'RE
SECRET
SACRED
WARS
...









SORRY I GOT
A LITTLE ROUGH
BACK THERE,
CITIZEN
...

AD'S
OGAY...

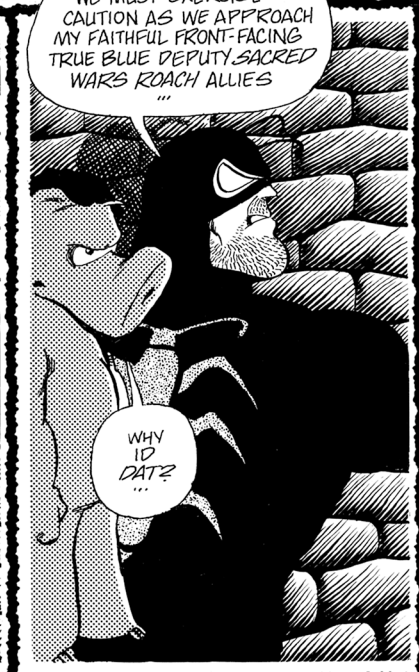
IS ID'S DOT
WUD THI'S, ID'S
ADUTHER

THA
ROCK



WE MUST EXERCISE
CAUTION AS WE APPROACH
MY FAITHFUL FRONT-FACING
TRUE BLUE DEPUTY SACRED
WARS ROACH ALLIES
...

WHY
ID
DAT?
...



BECAUSE I SUSPECT THAT
THEY'RE REALLY FILTHY, SLIMY
TURNCOATS WHO ARE WAITING
FOR ME TO LET DOWN MY
GUARD SO THEY CAN BETRAY
ME...

OH.



AH JEST
WISH HE'D
GIT BACK





DID
YOU GET
ALL THAT?

BOST
OB ID
...



HOWAH WISHTAH COULD FER GIT
THET TH' FATE NOT ON 'Y OF OUR
WORLD IS IN JEPPIDY BUT THET
TH' FATE O' REALITY ISSELF
IS AT STAKE. IT SEEMSTOO
MUCH FERA EX-MERCEN-
EERIE, EX-BODY-GUARD,
AN EX-SECURITY GUYT TH'
PRIME MINISTER TUH
COMPREHEND LET ALONE
TUH DOENNYNTHIN' ABOUT...

IT IS ON 'YTH'S STRENGTH
OF OUR BELIEF IN TH'
SACRED WARS ROADCH
THAT KEERSTH'S CALES
TIPPED IN OUR FAVOR
WEC'N NEVER FER GIT
THET-- UH

YER
TURN...

THET
...

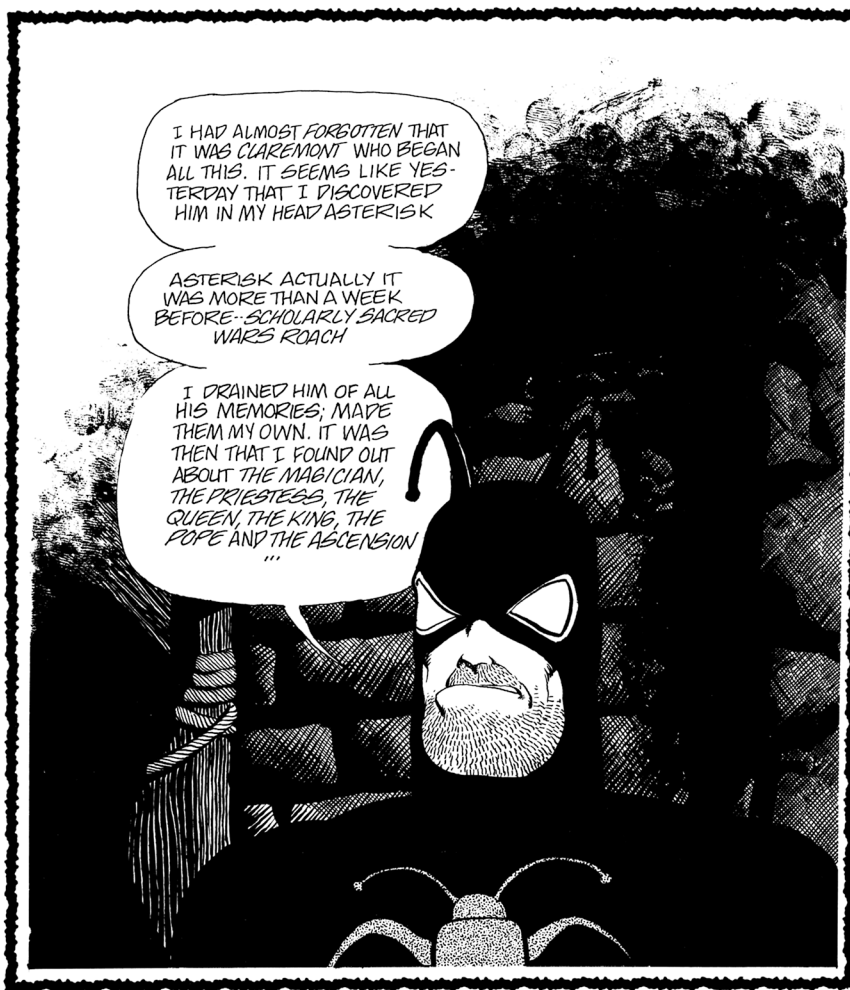


OH
YEAH
...

THET FER HIMT 'BETH ON 'YONE
TUH KNOW WHUT TH' SACRED WARS
IS ALL ABOUT IS A GREAT BARDEN...

ALL THE TIME
I FEEL THEIR
EYES UPON
ME...

THE UNSPOKEN QUESTION
"WHEN WILL THE DREADFUL
POWER WITHIN HIM BREAK
FREE"



I HAD ALMOST FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS CLAREMONT WHO BEGAN ALL THIS. IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY THAT I DISCOVERED HIM IN MY HEAD ASTERISK

ASTERISK ACTUALLY IT WAS MORE THAN A WEEK BEFORE... SCHOLARLY SACRED WARS ROACH

I DRAINED HIM OF ALL HIS MEMORIES; MADE THEM MY OWN. IT WAS THEN THAT I FOUND OUT ABOUT THE MAGICIAN, THE PRIESTESS, THE QUEEN, THE KING, THE POPE AND THE ASCENSION ...



AH AIN'T HEARD THIS PART AFORE ...

MEBBE WE OUGHTA BE TAKIN' NOTES



IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE WEISSHAUPT LIES DEAD OR DYING, HAVING SOUGHT TO BEND REALITY TO HIS WILL ASTERISK...

...ASTERISK- ACTUALLY WEISSHAUPT DIED YESTERDAY... OMNISCIENT SACRED WARS ROACH

THE FALSE POPE HAD A QUEEN AND A PRIESTESS - HENROT-GUTCH AND SOPHIA, BUT THEY HAVE DISAPPEARED AND SO HAS HE... THE ARRIVAL OF TARIM IN HIS FORM AS A VENGEFUL GIANT NOW HERALDS SACRED WARS TWO ...

ASTORIA AND CIRIN VIE FOR THE MANTLE OF QUEEN, THE ROLE OF PRIESTESS HAVING BEEN CEDED TO ASTORIA...



SO MANY
FORCES AT
WORK
...

SO MANY
TIE-IN'S
...

SO MANY
CROSS-
OVERS
...

POK
NHUMP



I...

...NEED...

...MORE...

...CHARACTER!!



UH-OH



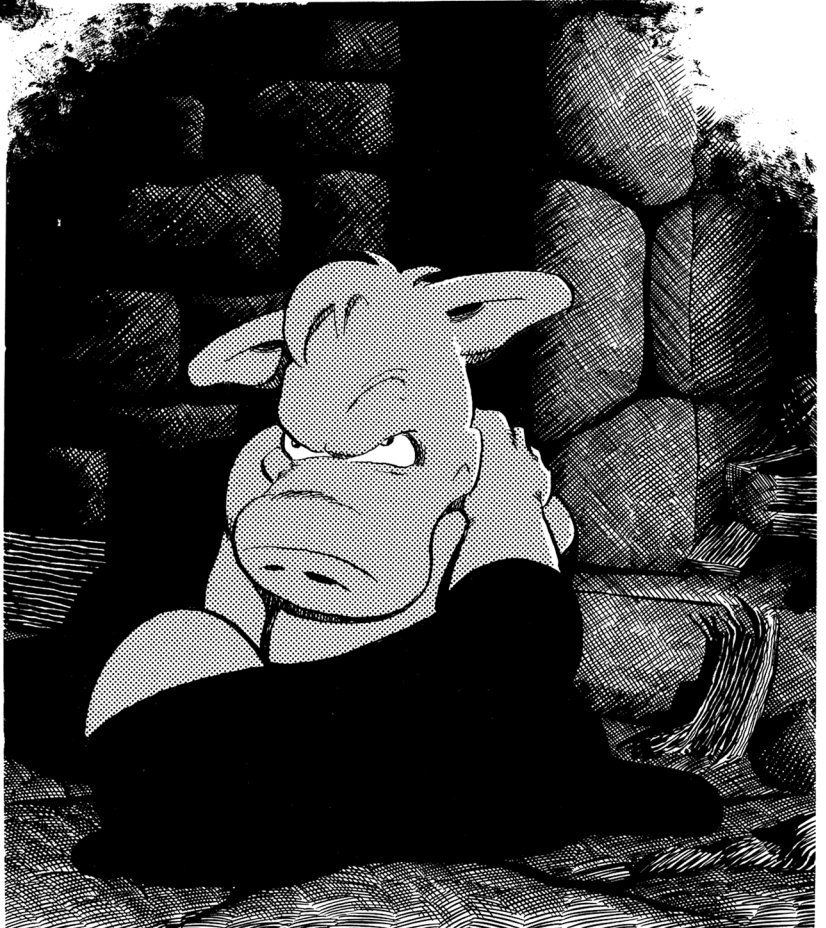
AND WE ALL KNOW
THE ONLY WAY TO
CREATE CHARACTER...

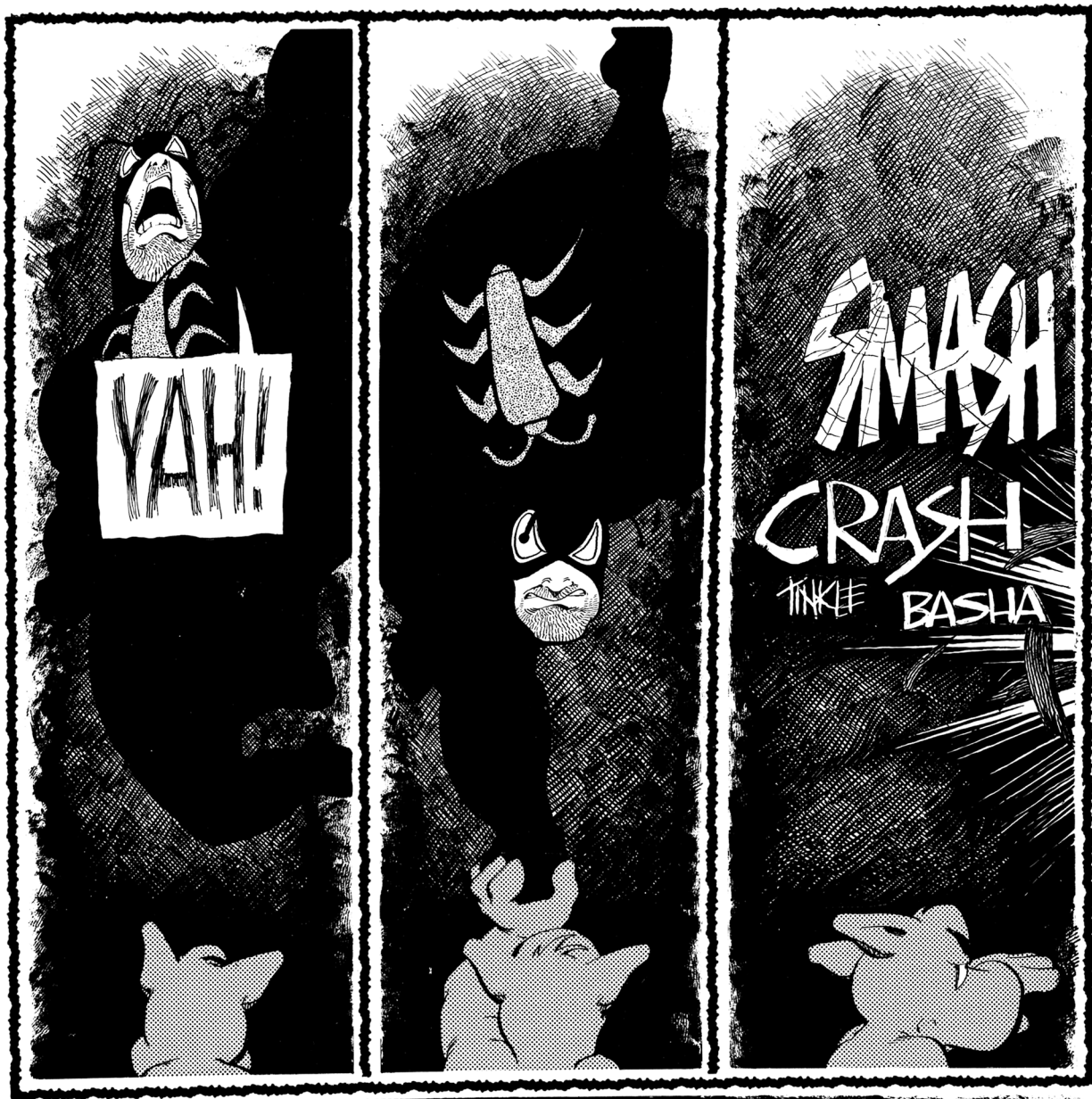
DON'T
WE?

CRACK
-KRIKA

CONFLICT



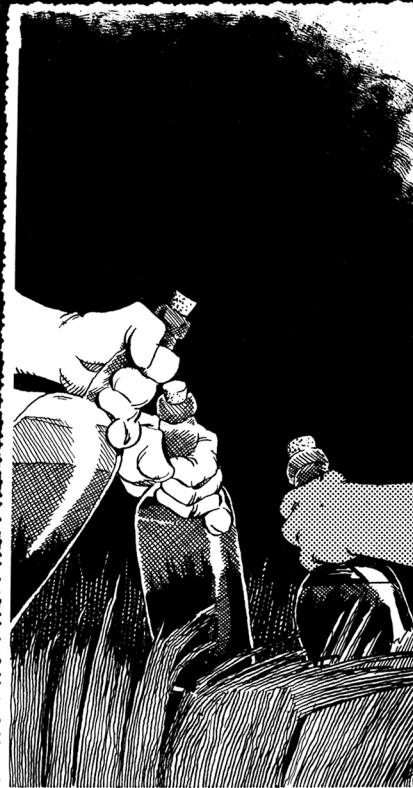
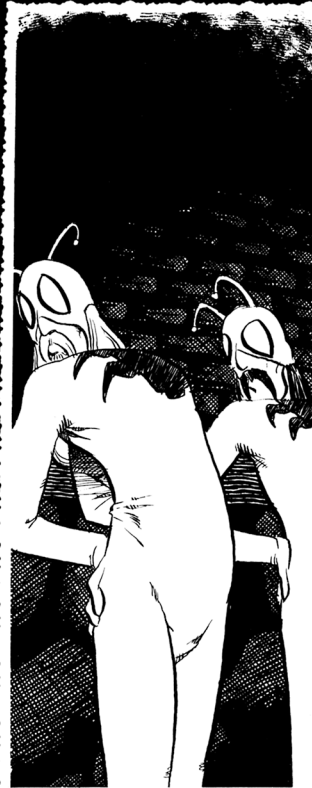


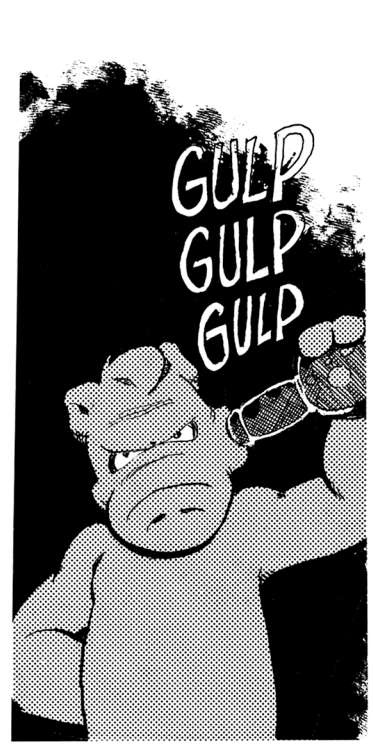
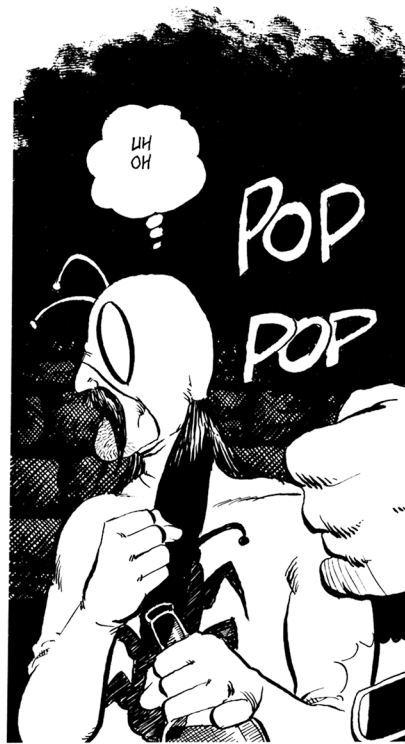
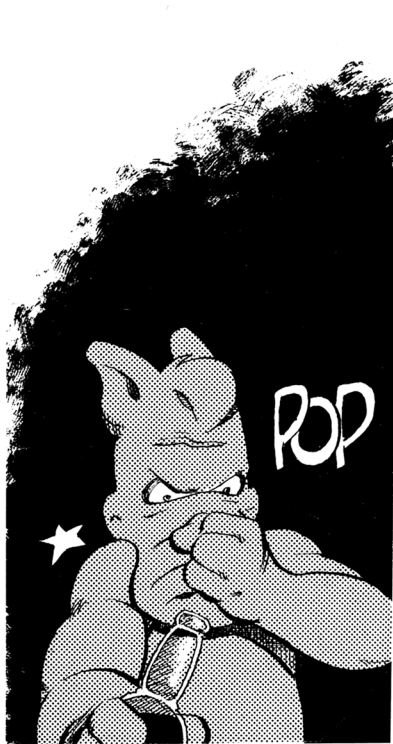


DERKASS! TH' AN'EYE-SACRED
WARS ROACH IS HYAR HE WHOSE
COMIN' WAS FERTOLD TUH US AN'
WHOSE ARRIVAL WE'VE PREARED
FER HOURS! DERKASS! TH'
ON' YCRITTER THET'S MORE
POWERFUL THEN OUR BOSS MAN
TH' SACRED WARS ROACH

DERKASS! EVEN 'IS NAME
IS ENUFF TUH GIMME COTTON
MOUTH AN' TURN MUH COLON
ALL SPASTIC FER A SEVEN A
SCHOOL CHILD KNOWS 'IS
COMIN' FER SHAPONS A
NEW ESCALATION O' TH'
SACRED WARS

IF 'N WE DON'T DO
EVERTHIN' JEST
AS DERKASS DOES,
TH' ENTIRE BALANCE
O' TH' WHOLE RANG-
DANG-DOO MULTIEYE-
VERSE 'LL BE
THROWED OLITTA
WACK LIKE OUR BOSS
MAN TH' SACRED
WARS ROACH TOL'
US AFORE 'IS
COMA...





GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP



GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP



Ooooooooooh!

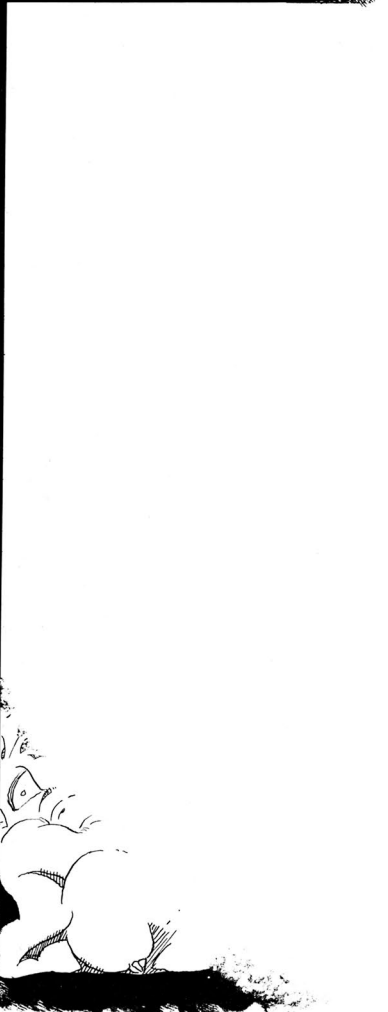
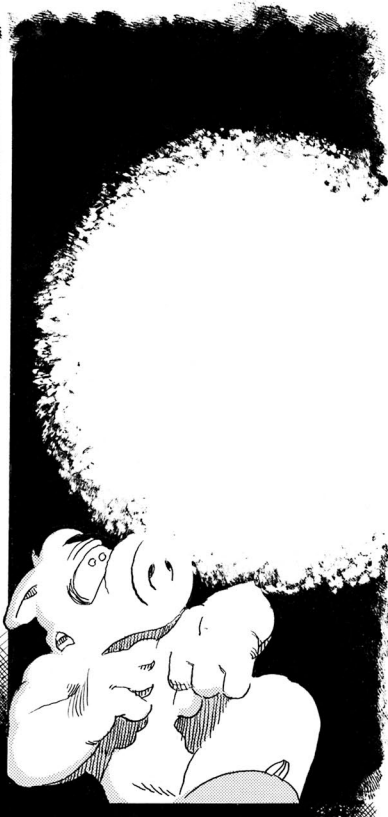
tempus
fugit



**GREAT
FROSTON!**

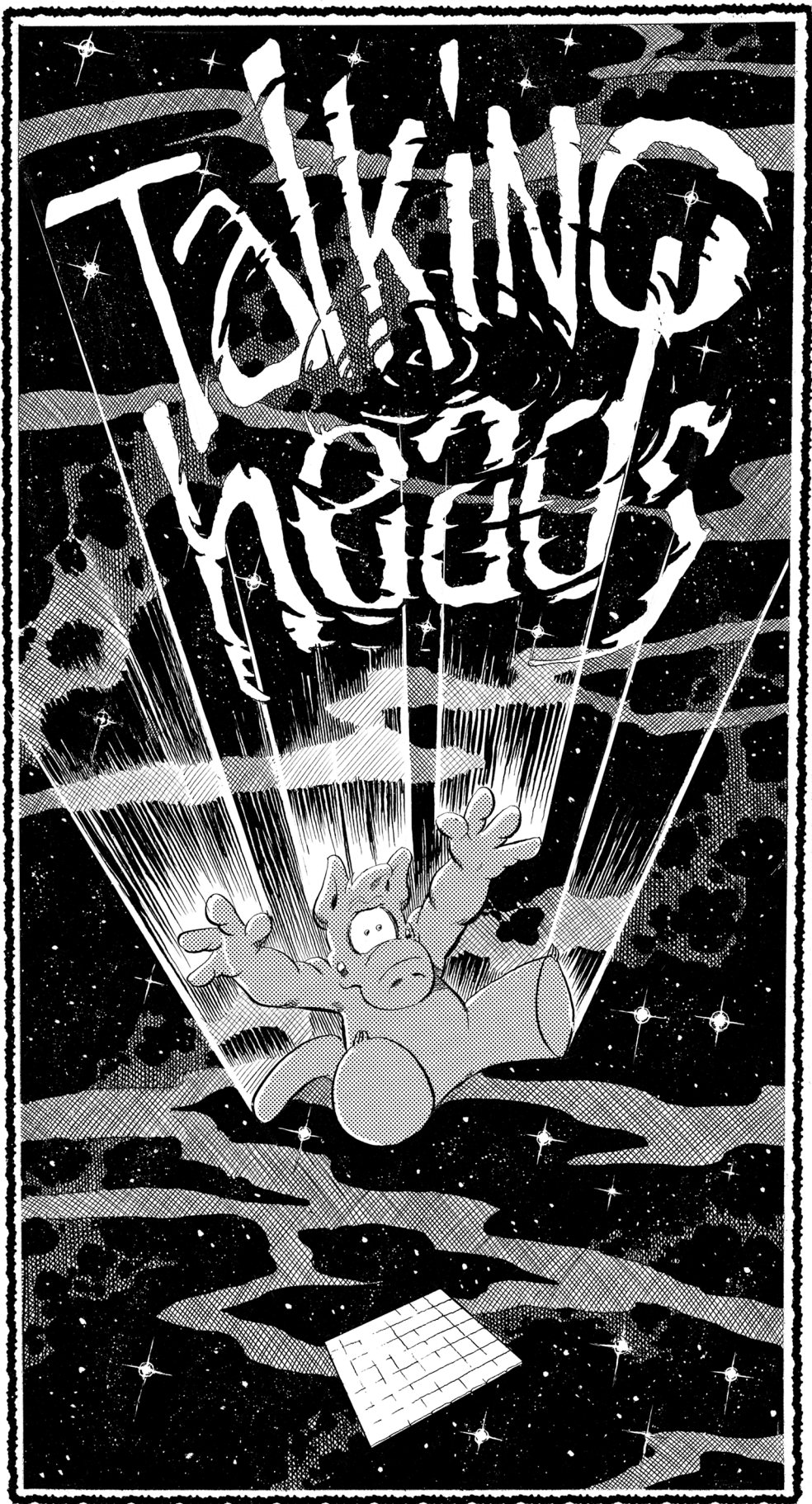
SOMEHOW THEY DISCOVERED THE
SECRETS SACRED WARS STORES
AND THE BOTTLES OF LIQUID
AMBER FROSTONITE THE ONLY
SUBSTANCE IN THE KNOWN MICRO
MACROVERSE THAT CAN ROB THE
SACRED WARS ROACH OF HIS
SACRED WARS POWERS AND
MAKE HIM AS HELPLESS AS A
TWO-DAY-OLD SACRED WARS
KITTEN

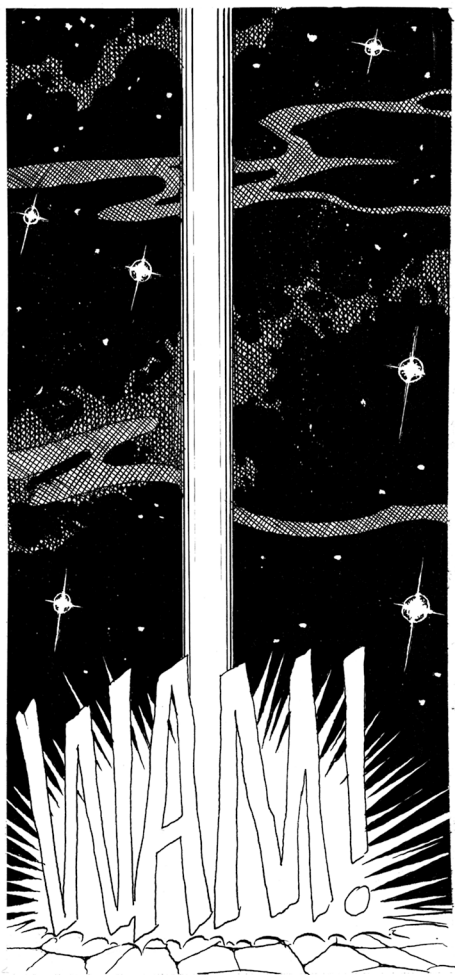




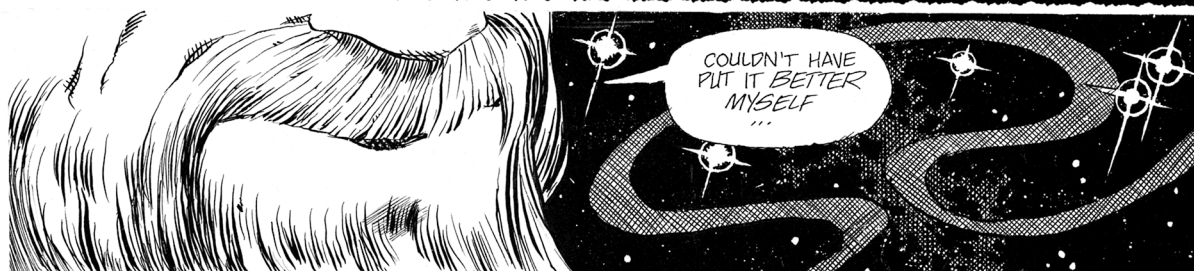


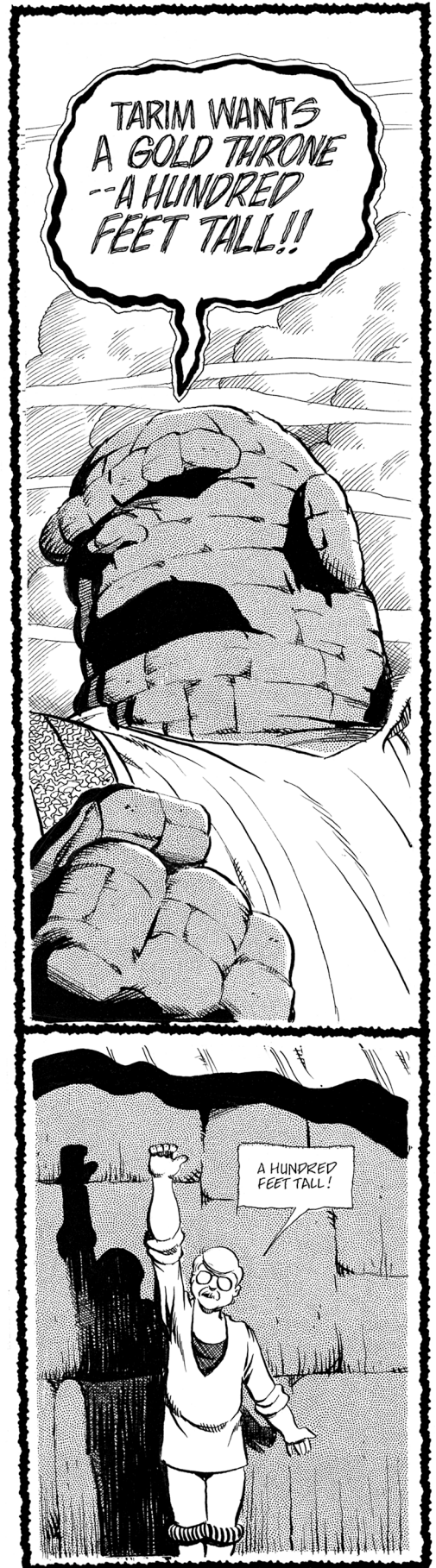
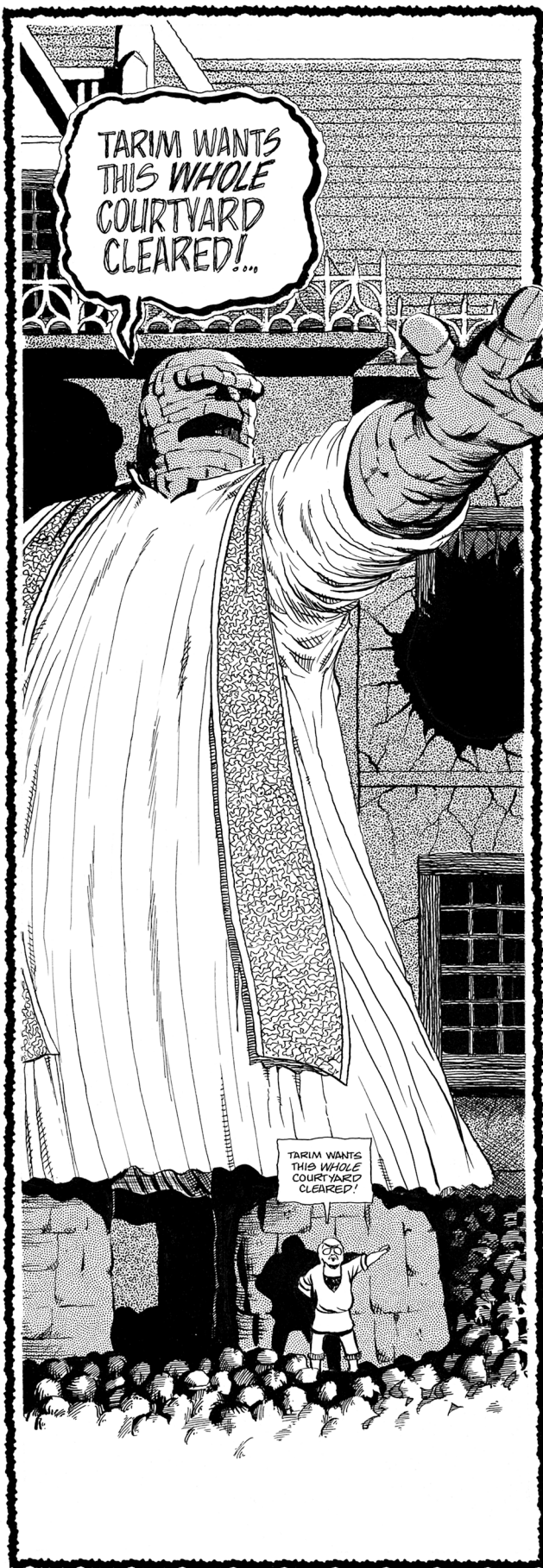
NEXT: INSIDE THE BIG ROUND GLOWING WHITE STRANGE THING







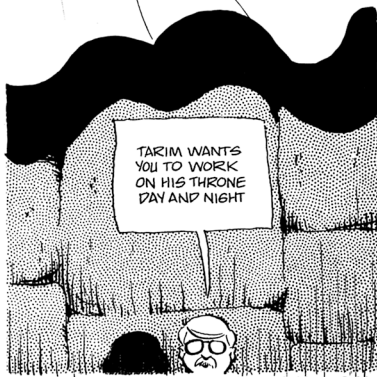




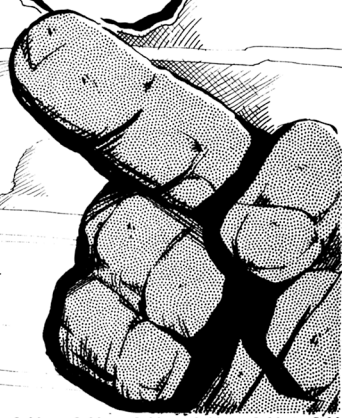
TARIM WANTS
YOU TO WORK
ON HIS THRONE
DAY AND NIGHT
UNTIL IT'S
DONE!!



TARIM WANTS
YOU TO WORK
ON HIS THRONE
DAY AND NIGHT



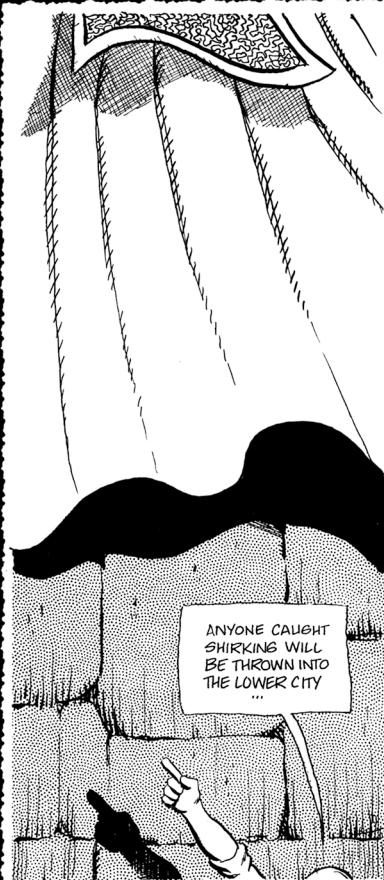
ANYONE
CAUGHT
SHIRKING
WILL BE
THROWN
INTO THE
LOWER
CITY!!



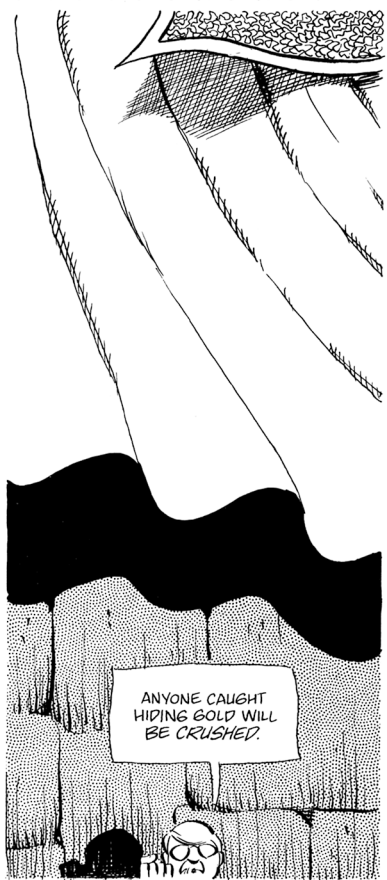
ANYONE
CAUGHT
HIDING
GOLD WILL
BE
CRUSHED!!

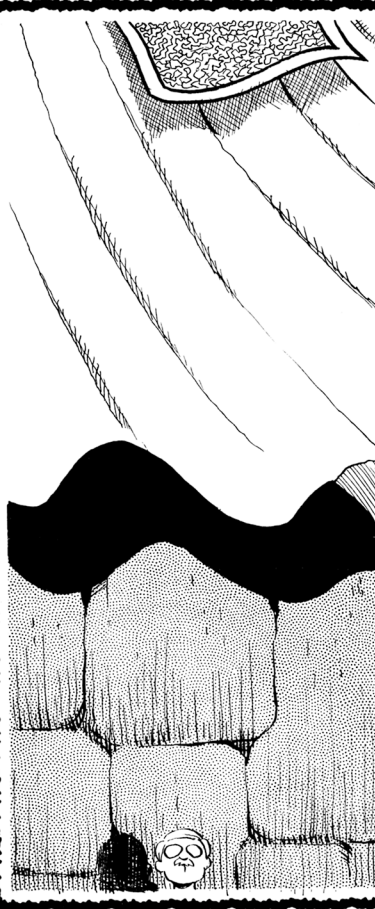
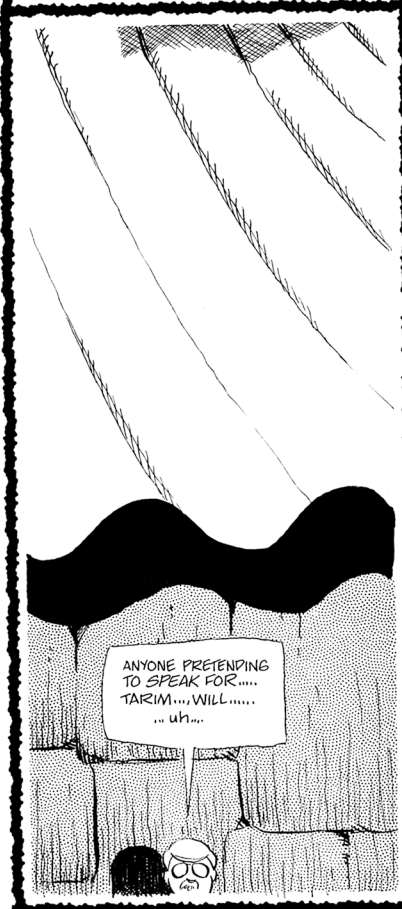


ANYONE CAUGHT
SHIRKING WILL
BE THROWN INTO
THE LOWER CITY
...

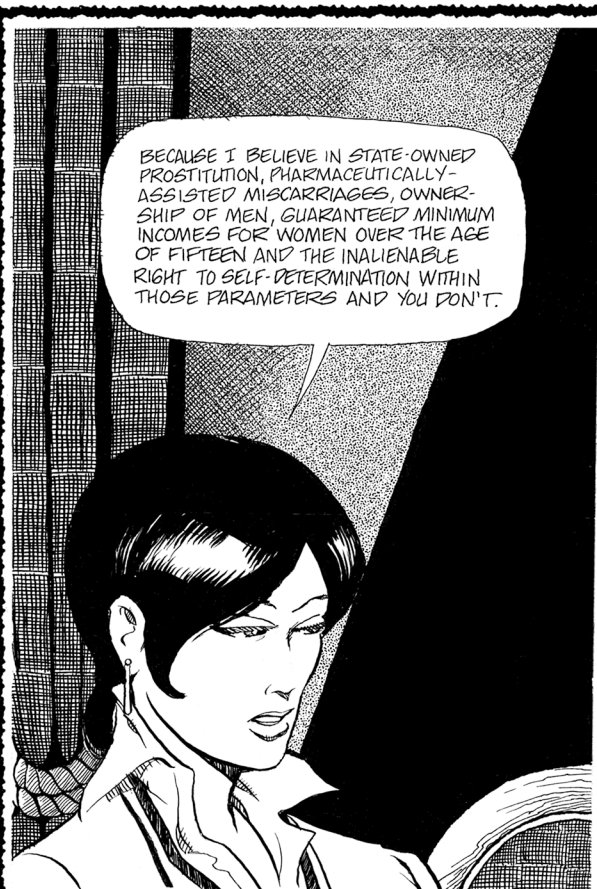


ANYONE CAUGHT
HIDING GOLD WILL
BE CRUSHED.











WHAT IN THE HELL
IS *THIS* SUPPOSED
TO BE?!

SAY
WHUDZ

WE'RE... UM
TARIM, ACTUALLY.
THE TRINITY OF
TARIM, YOU KNOW...

FRED, ETHEL
AND THE LITTLE
FELLOW WITH
THE HAIR...

UM... FRED DOESN'T
SEEM TO CARE FOR
YOUR ATTITUDE
...

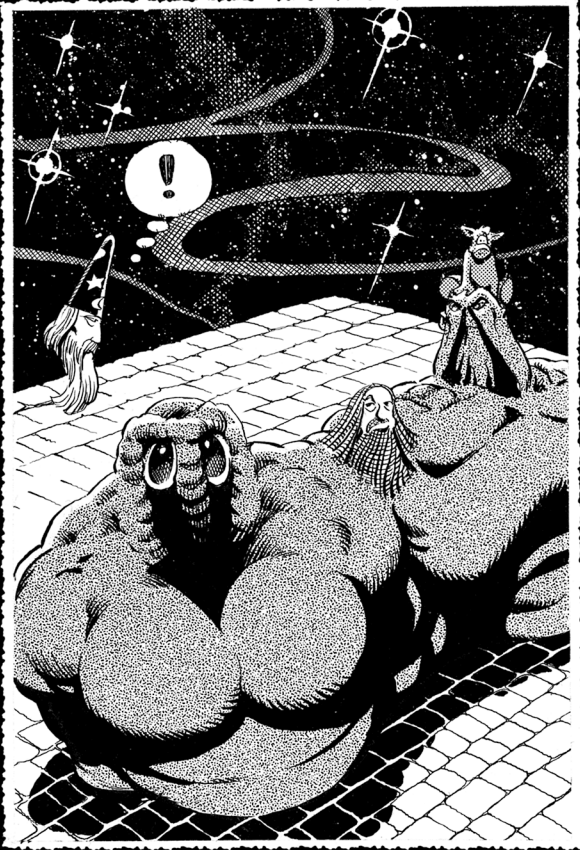
WAITAMINNIT! YOU'RE
THE ARTIST CHAP
CLAREMONT HAD
THE RUN-IN WITH
JUST BEFORE HE
DISAPPEARED!

YOU
MORON!

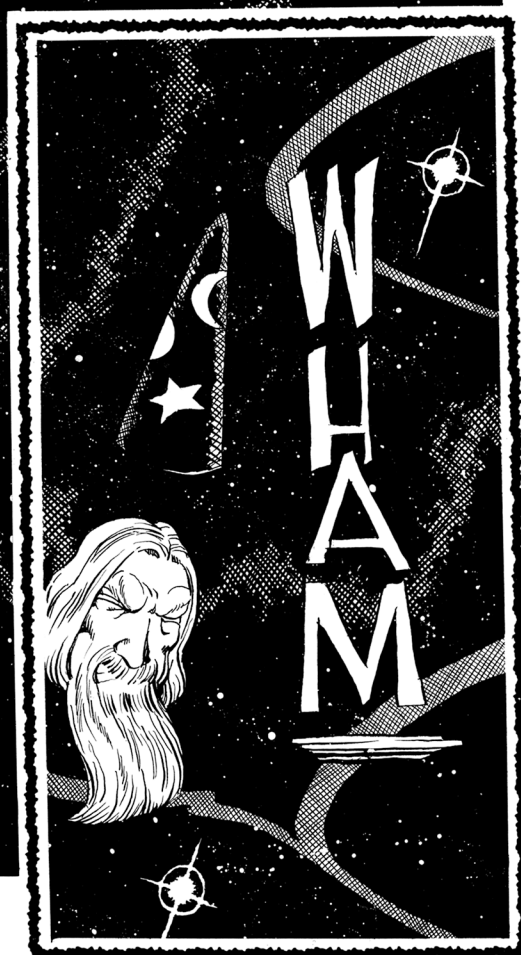
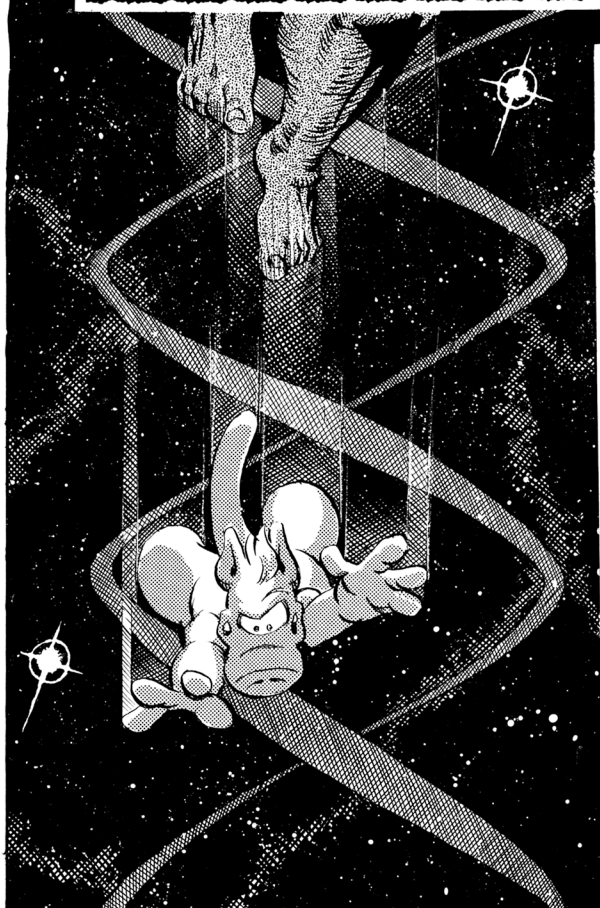
AN ARTIST
CAN'T BE
TARIM!!

WHUD'S
GO'ING
ODD?

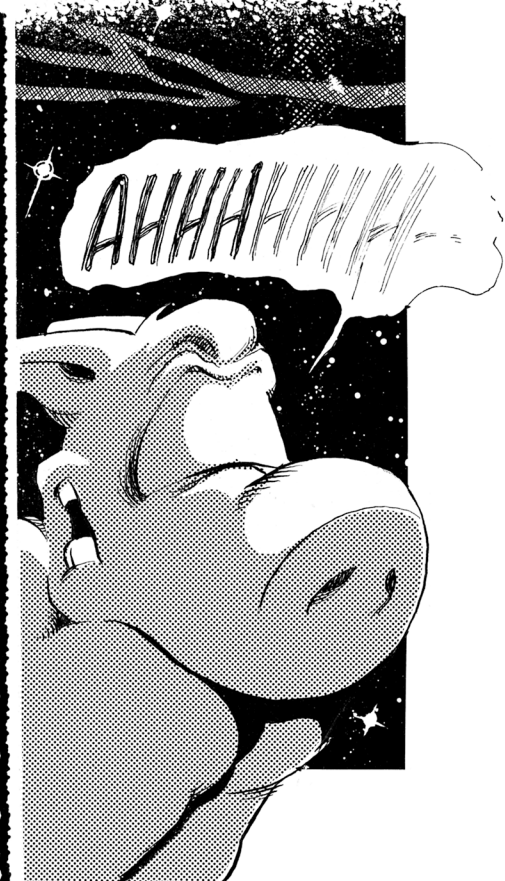
NOW YOU'VE
GONE AND HURT
FRED'S FEELINGS
...

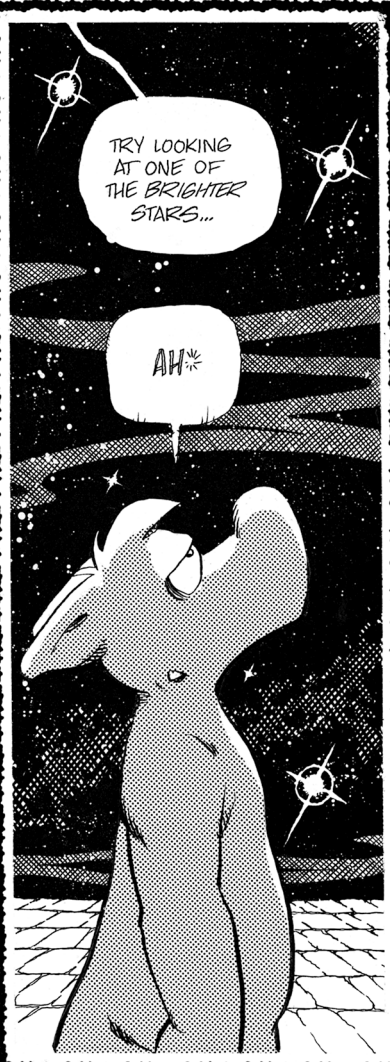
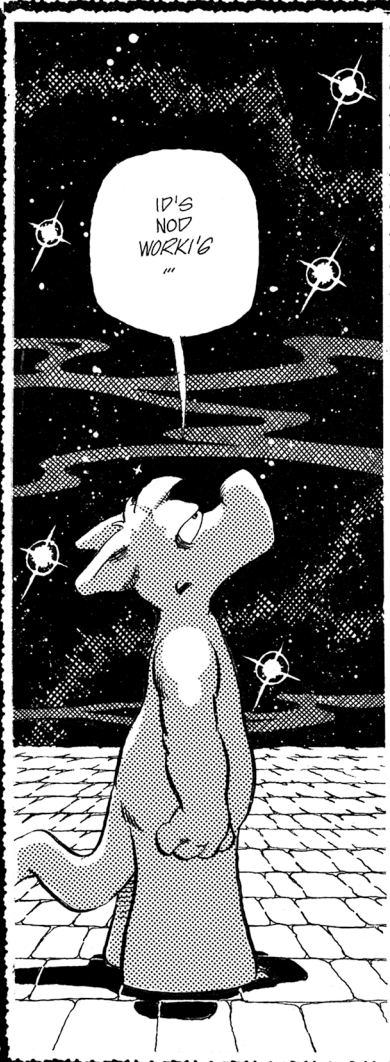
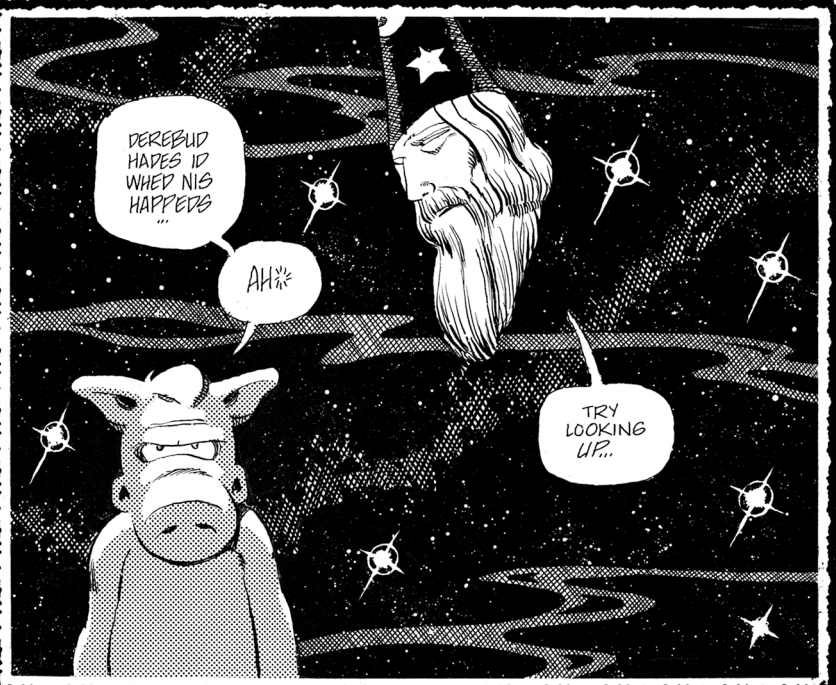


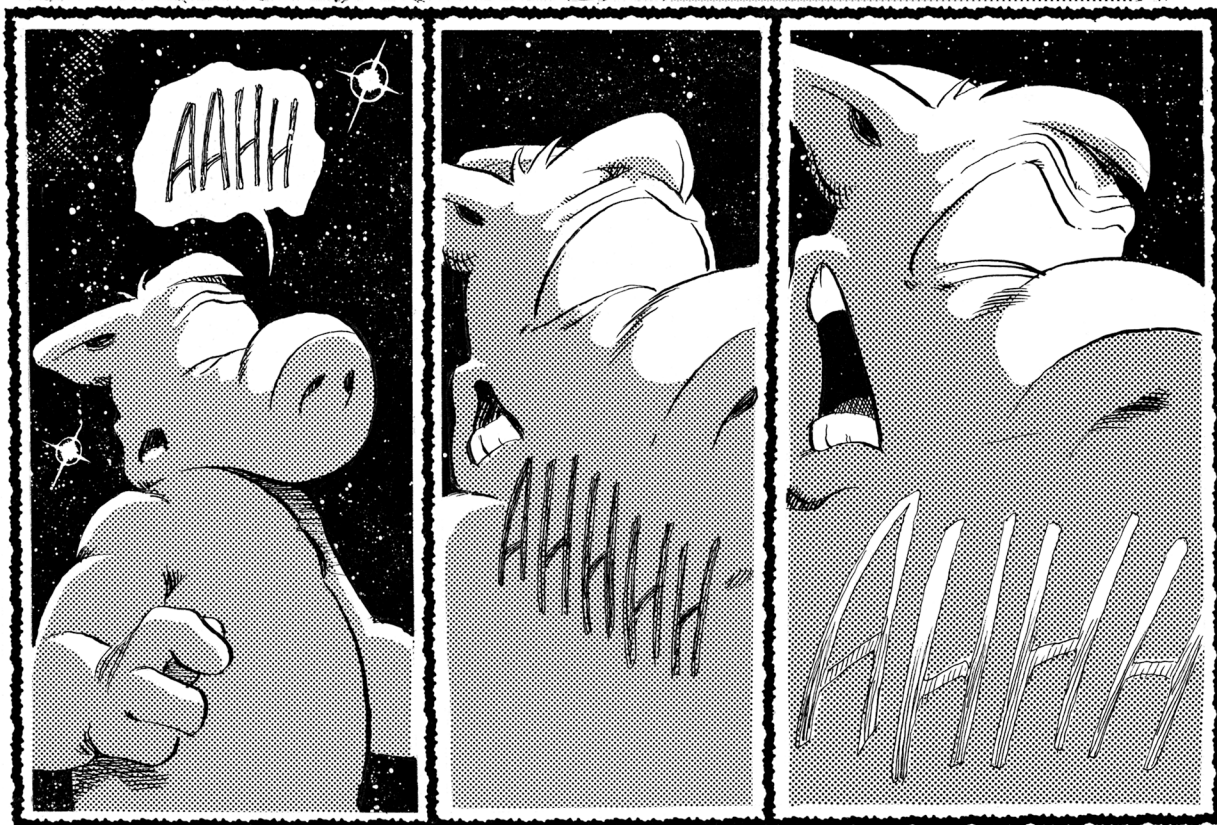
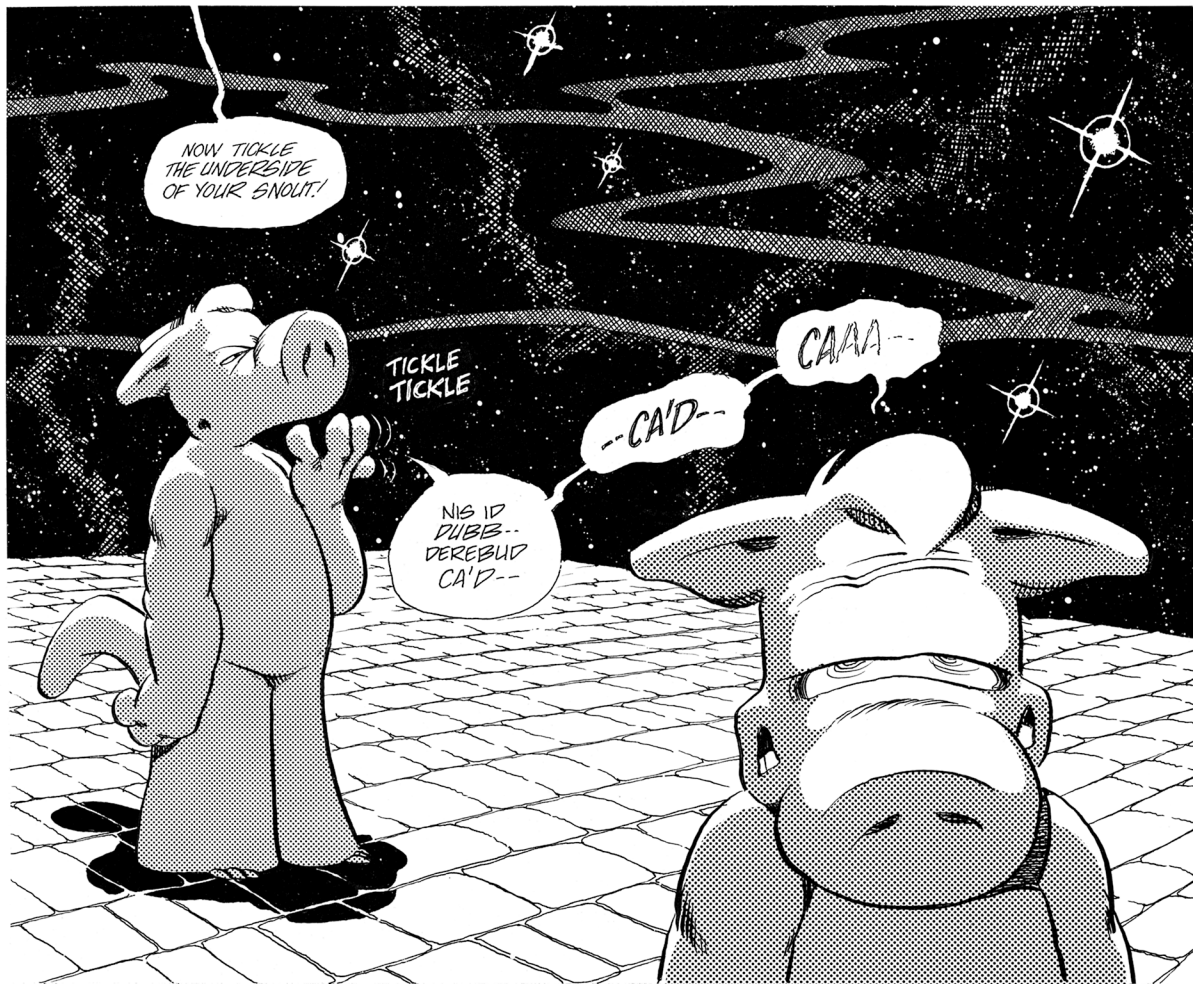




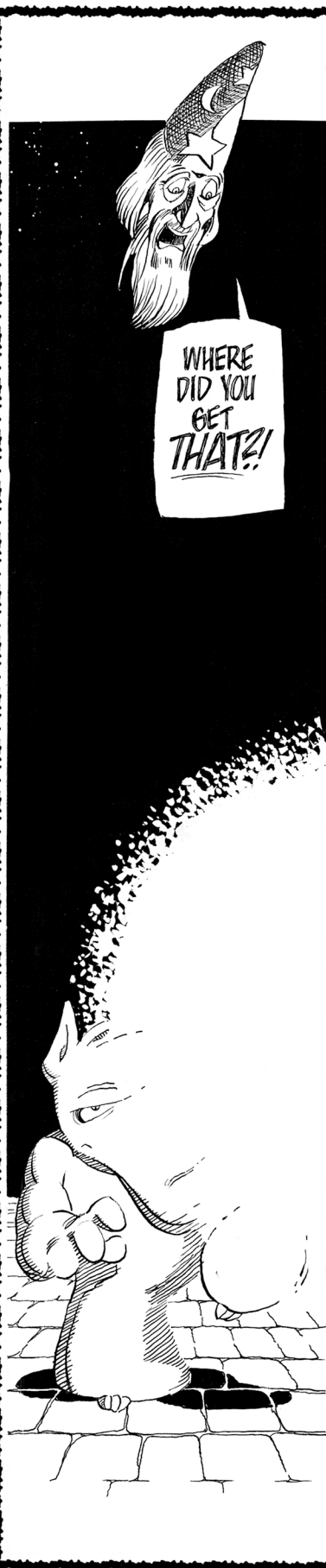
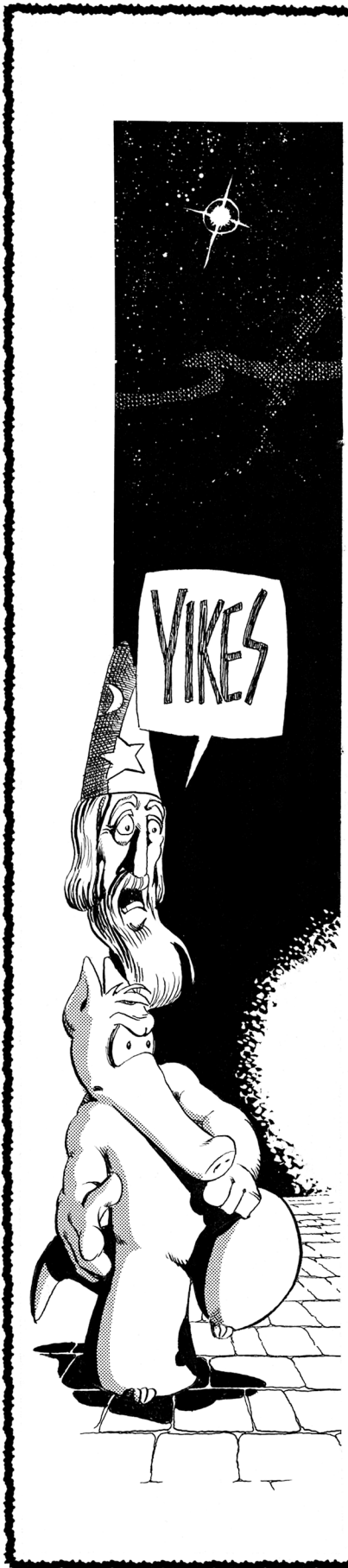


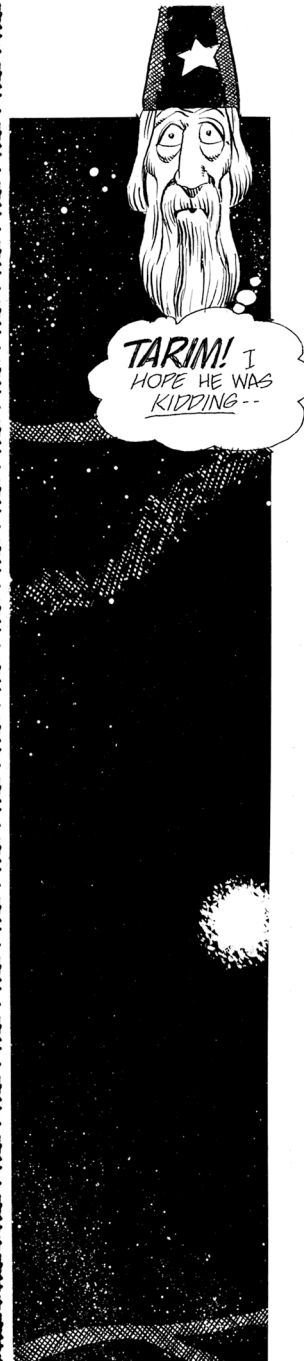




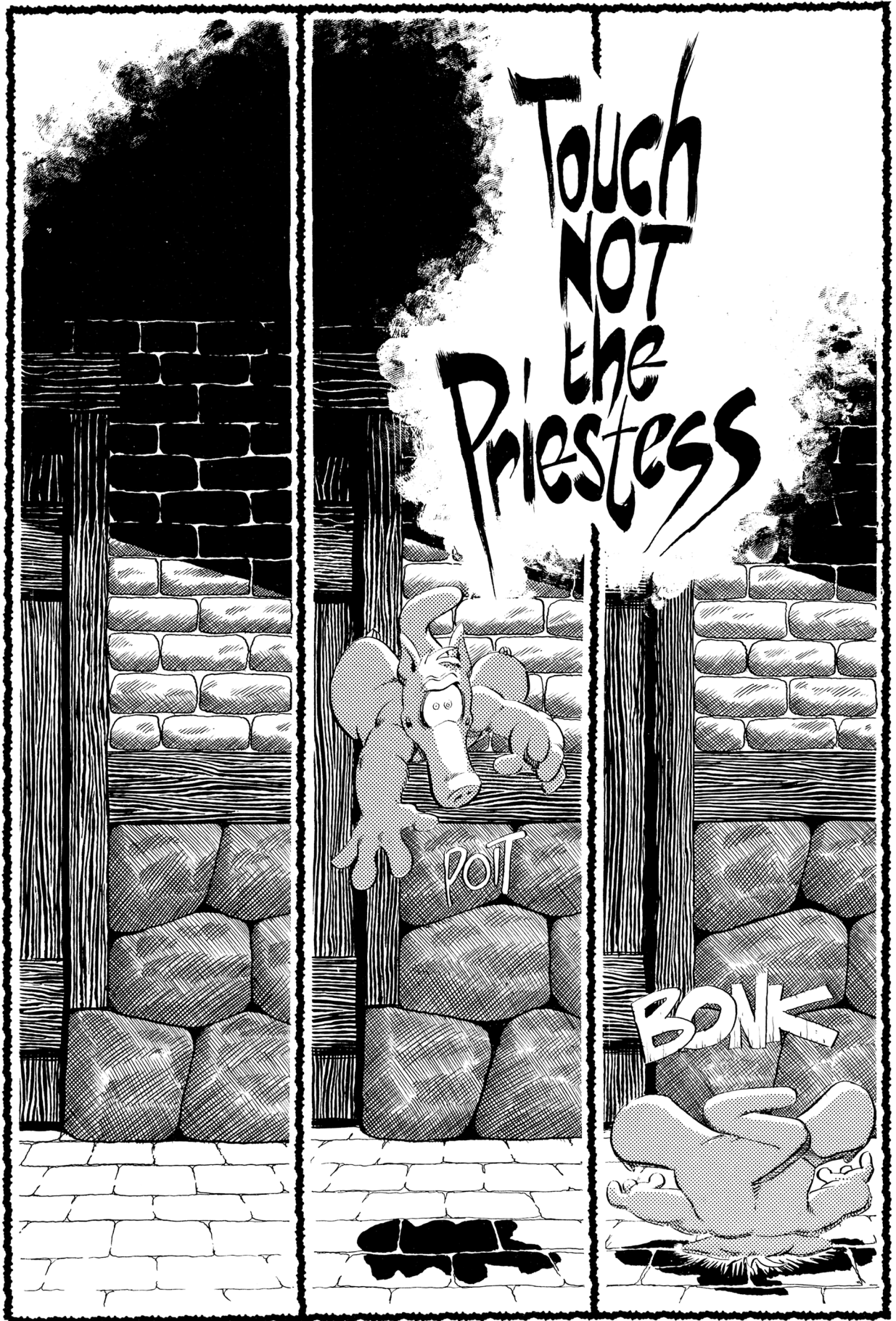


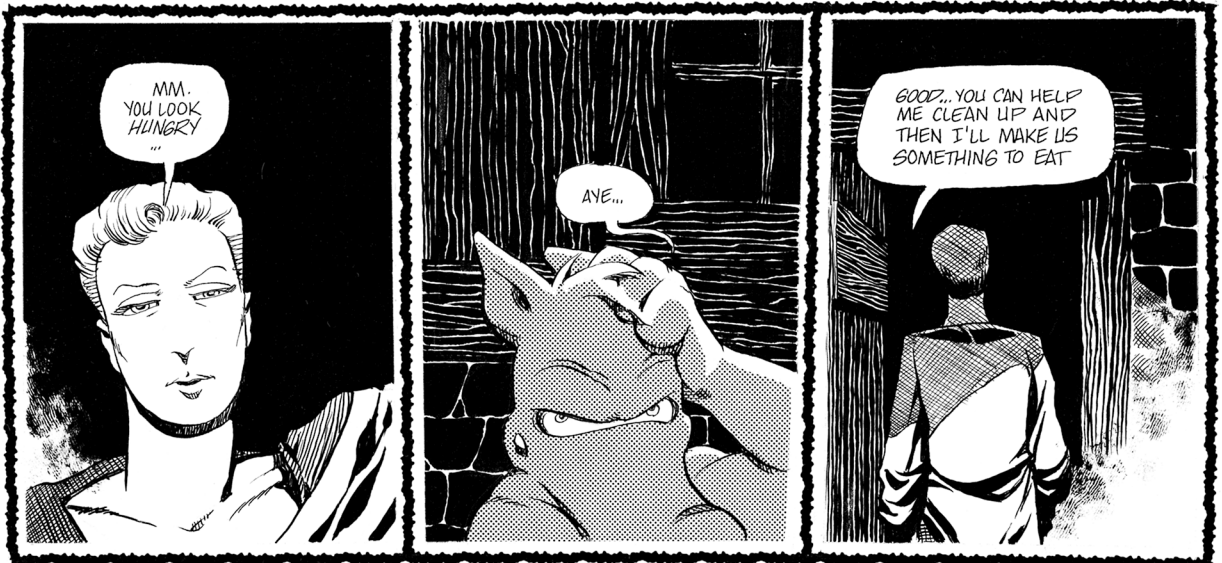








NEXT: Touch Not The Priestess









I DON'T THINK YOU KNOW
HOW RIDICULOUS YOU ALL APPEAR
WALKING AROUND WITH THAT...
"SOMETHING WONDERFUL IS
ABOUT TO HAPPEN" LOOK ON
YOUR FACES...



FOR THE LIFE OF
ME I DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT YOU THINK IT'S ALL
GOING TO LEAD TO...




ARTEMIS IS STICKING
TO THINGS AND DISAP-
PEARING INTO THIN AIR.
I MEAN, SO WHAT? I
SAW A SNAKE WITH
TWO HEADS ONCE
...



FOR SOME REASON YOU
ALL APPARENTLY WANT TO
BE TARIM. NOT A POPE
OR A PROPHET OR EVEN A
MESSIAH...

YOU WANT TO BE
THE CREATOR OF
ALL THINGS...



WELL YOU CAN'T BE
CAN YOU? I MEAN
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
CREATE THE HEAVENS
AND THE EARTH AGAIN?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO...
THEY'RE ALREADY HERE



IT KILLED
WEISSHAUPT.
KILLED HIM...

AND
FOR
WHAT?



OVER
AGAINST THE
WALL WILL BE
FINE...



YOU KNOW WHAT I
THINK OF WHEN I
THINK OF
WEISSHAUPT?



THE MAN WAS
A HELL OF A
GARDENER
"



HE DID MY GARDENS
FOR ME. USUALLY SOME
LACKEY WOULD DO THE
BASIC MAINTENANCE
"



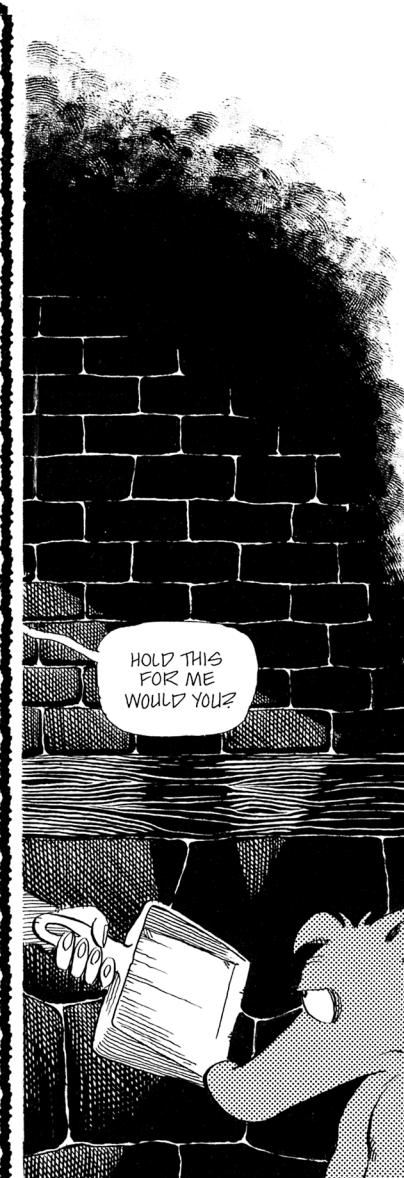
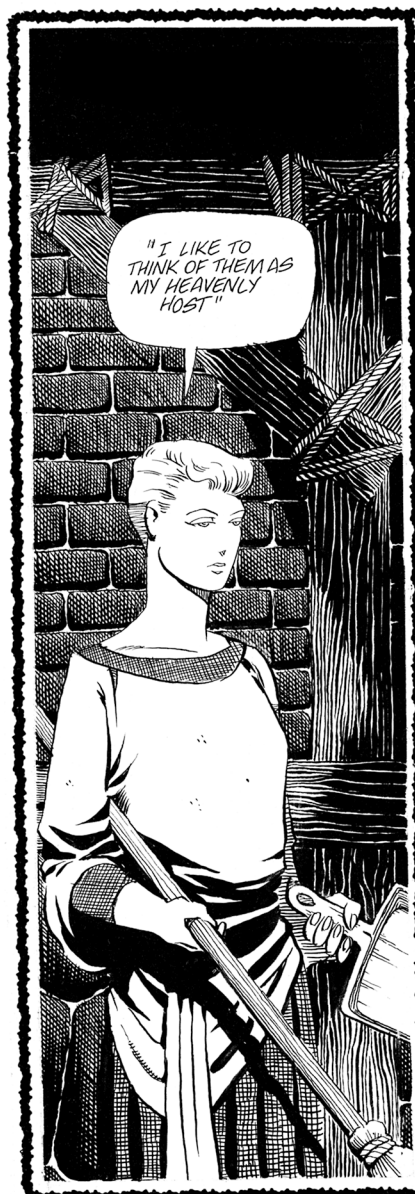
BUT HE HAD THE
GIFT FOR IT. JUST
SET THINGS OUT
IN HIS OWN PATTERNS
AND THEY'D THRIVE
"



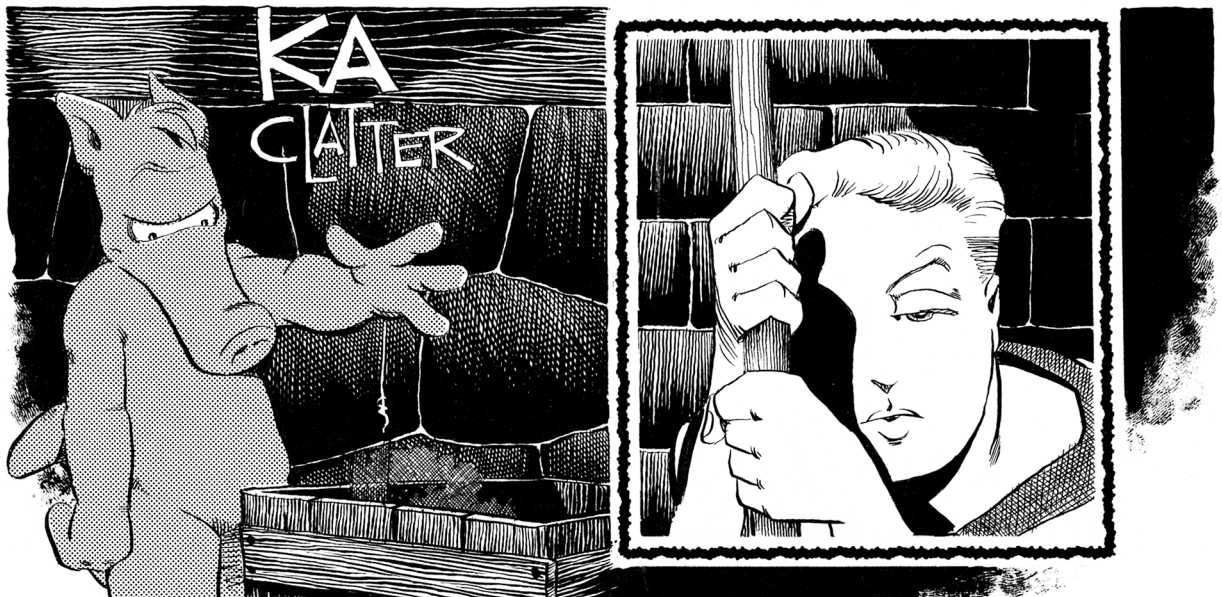
"SLAVE FOR HIM, REALLY LIVING IN CONSTANT DREAD OF INCURRING HIS DISPLEASURE"

"I DIDN'T THINK HE KNEW I WAS THERE, BUT HE DID. AND HE SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING"



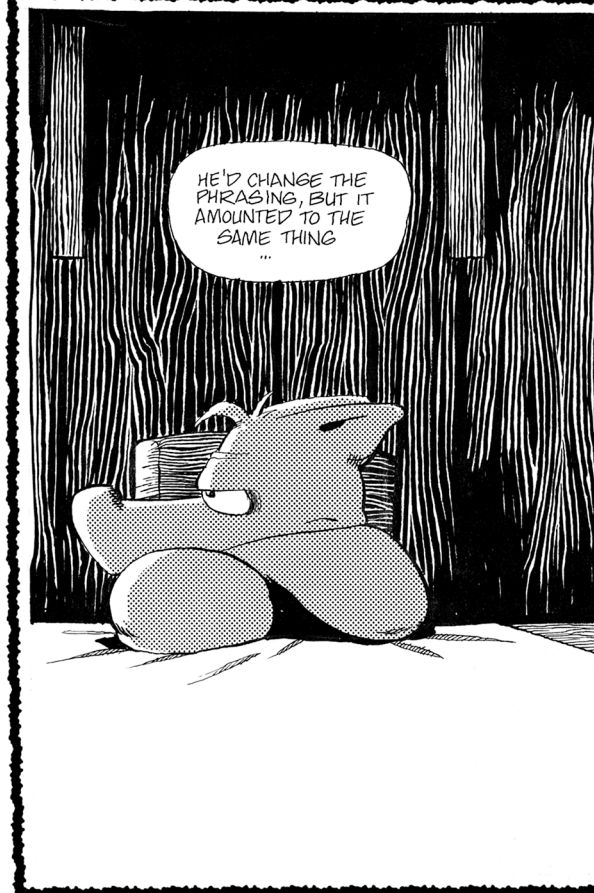
















OH.



THAT'S OKAY,
HE DIDN'T GET
IT EITHER...



HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT
BOOKS I'D BEEN READING...
WHO I GOT THEM FROM. I
TOLD HIM THEY WEREN'T
EXACTLY BOOKS, THEY WERE
READS...



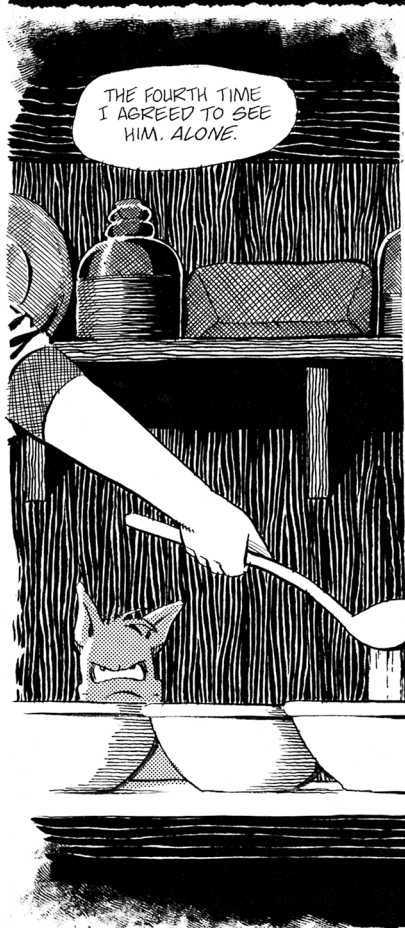
HE SAID "BUT THAT'S JUST TRASH"
AND I SAID "I KNOW" AND HE
SAID "WELL, WHY DO YOU READ
THEM?" AND I SAID "BECAUSE
I LIKE THEM."



THE NEXT DAY HE HAD MY
SALARY REDUCED SO I
COULDN'T AFFORD TO BUY
THEM AND GAVE ME SOME
BOOKS ON ECONOMICS....















NEXT: PATIENCE, FOLKS, SHE'S GETTING TO IT



CHARIOT
of the
QUEEN,
CHARIOT
of the
LOVERS

DINNER! HOW STRANGE IT SEEMS TO
EVEN THINK OF FOOD AS THE SACRED
WARS RAGE ALL AROUND US, CAUSING
ME TO REMEMBER WHEN I WASN'T
THE SACRED WARS ROACH, BEFORE
MY NEW BLACK COSTUME....

BUT, I MUST FORGET
ALL THAT, BECAUSE
EVERYTHING IS
DIFFERENT NOW
...

AGIN FLEABLE ROACH SEEKSTUH
BETH'ONETUHSIT NEXT TU HOUR
BOSSMAN TH' SACRED WARS
ROACH, CAUSIN' A RIFT BETWEEN
HIM N' ME...

AGIN DREW ROACH FERBITS THET
AH WUZ TH' FARST ALLY O' TH'
SACRED WARS ROACH N' THEREFORE
TH' ON' YONE ALLOWEFT 'EAT' IS
LEFTOVERS IF N THAR ARE ENNY

SMACK

PUNCH

MM. ONCE MORE
I'M FORCED TO
CLEAR MY
THROAT...

≡ AHEM ≡

TH' SECRETS SACRED WARS
ROACH SECRET THROAT.
CLEARIN' NOISE SIGNALLIN'
THET OUR BOSSMAN THE
SACRED WARS ROACH HAS
SOMETHIN' T' SAY...

IT SEEMS HARD TUH
BELIEVE THET ASSOON
AS WE STOP JAWIN' AT
EACH OTHER THET HE'LL
TELL US SOMETHIN'...

NOT MUCH
TIME! MUST
CHOOSE! MUST
DECIDE! NOW!
...

DREW
ROACH.

ASURPRAZIN'TARNINTH'
SACREDWARSN'ONEWHICH
BODESWELLFERTH'FORCES
O'GOODNESS'N'ORDER...

AHCAIN'THELPBUTSENGETHET
AMAJORMISTAKEHASSIN,MADE
'N'THETWESHALLALLPAYFER
IT'SOONER'N'WETHANK
...

TOPSECRETSACRED
WARSCREAMRISES
TOTHE TOPAND
EVERYTHINGELSE
ISJUSTWATERY
MILKSURPRISE
TRAININGTHING
--FIRSTONE TO
THEKITCHEN
GETSDOUBLE
SACREDWAR
RATIONS
GO!...







LEGGO, DREW
ROACH--AHM
GITTIN' TH'
DOUBLE RATIONS

PUNCH



OVER
MAH DAID
ANTENNEE
FLEAGLE-
ROACH!

CRACK



HAVE IT
YER OWN
WAY
DREW
ROACH!

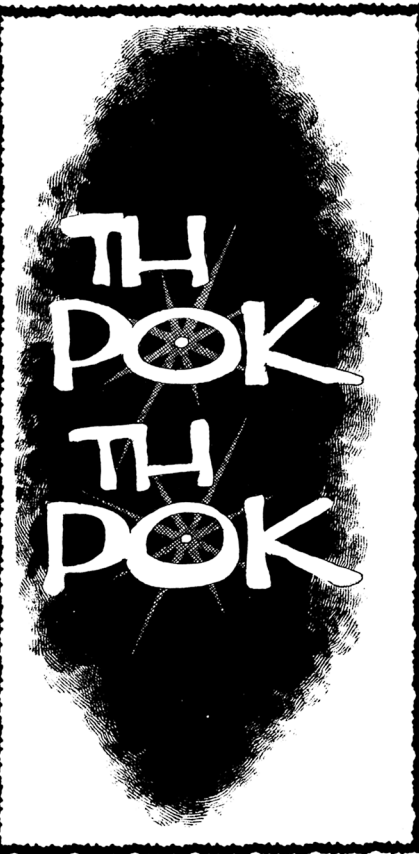
SWAK

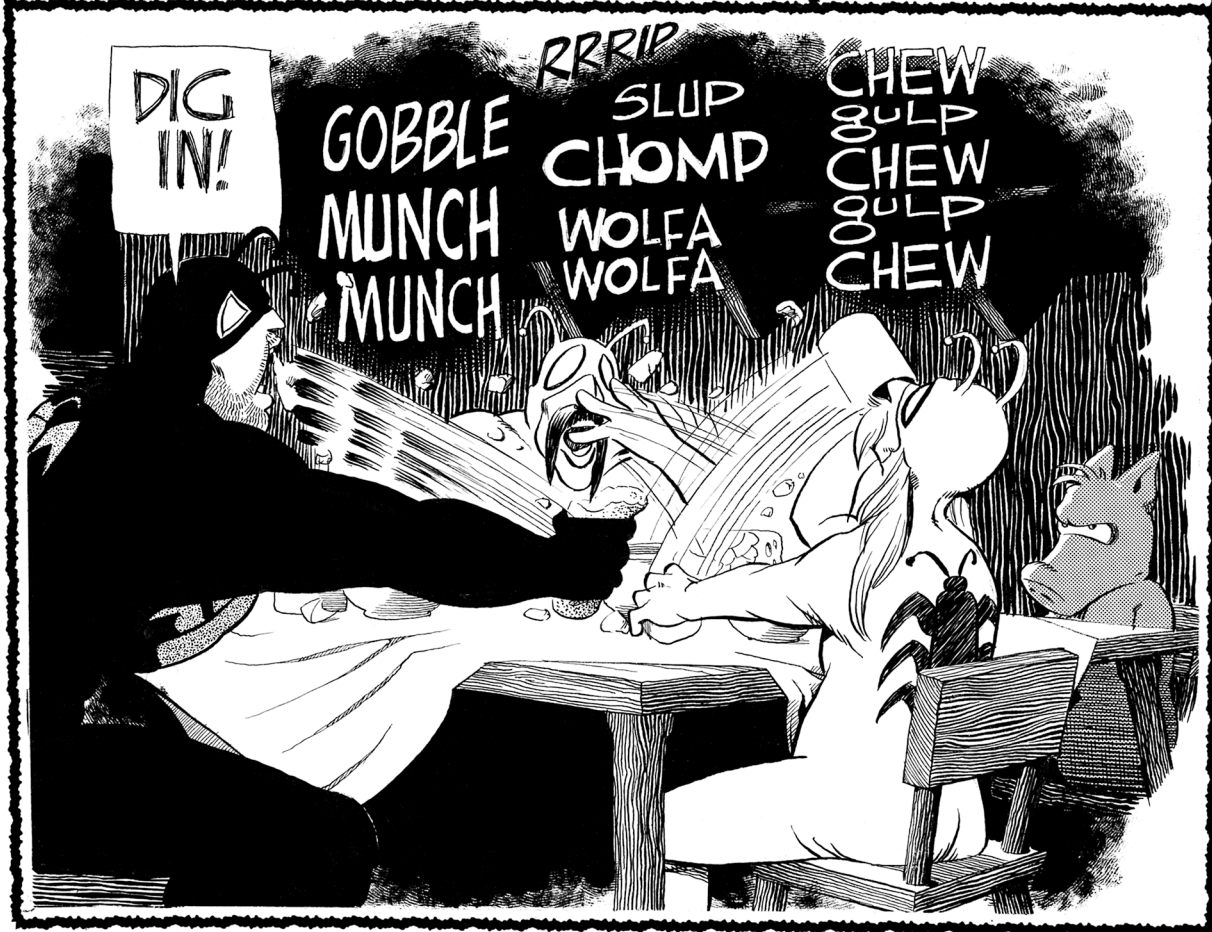


AHM COMIN'
COUN'ESS!!
KEEP THE
SOUP OUCHIE!

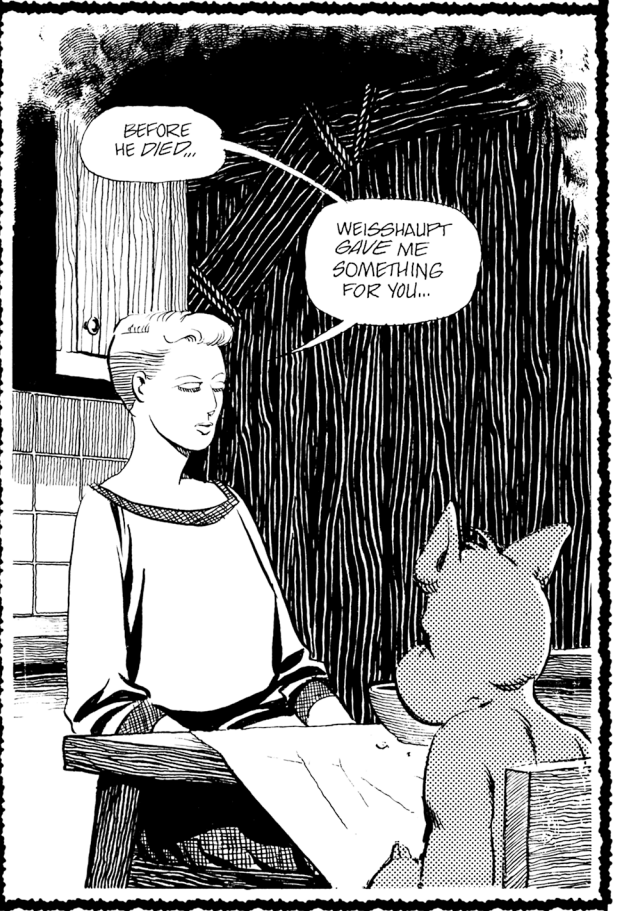
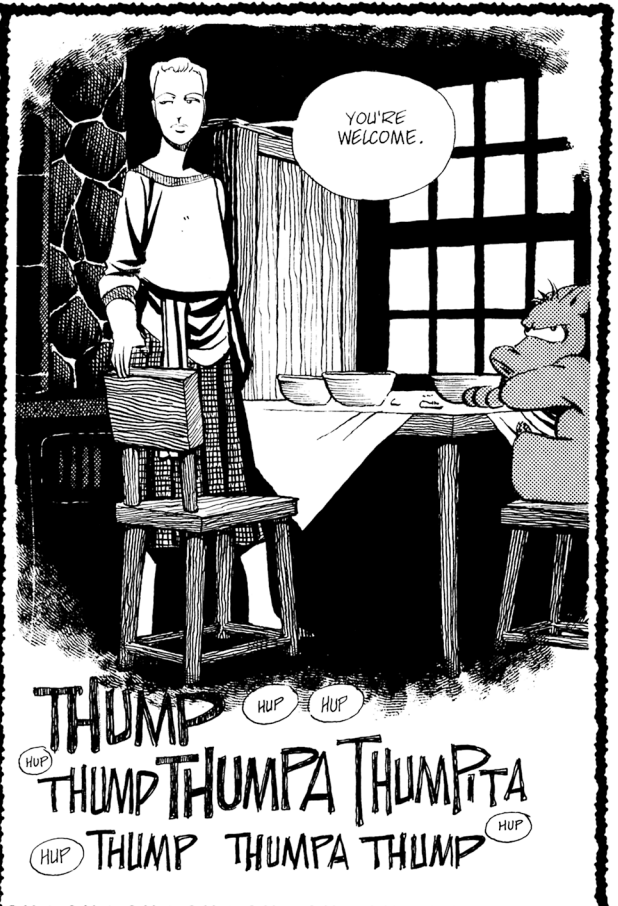
CRUNCH

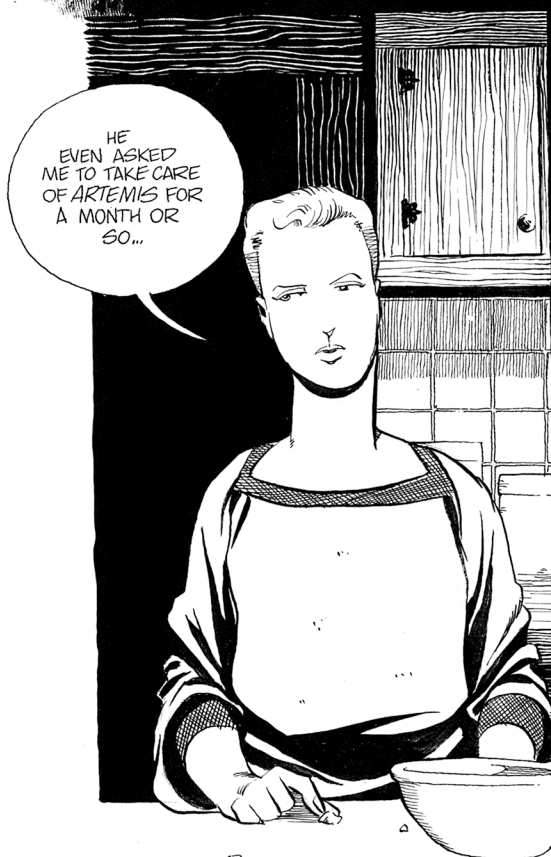
A small, round, alien-like character with a single antenna and a wide-open mouth is on the floor.

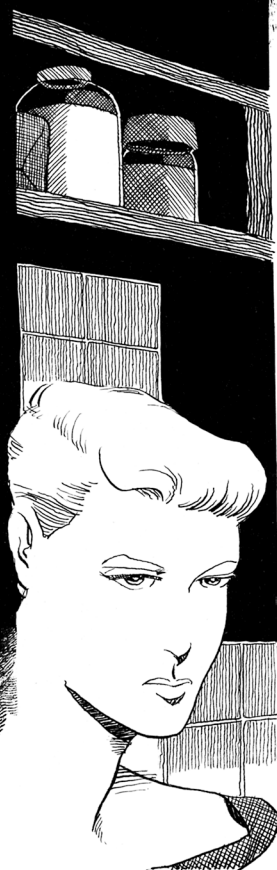
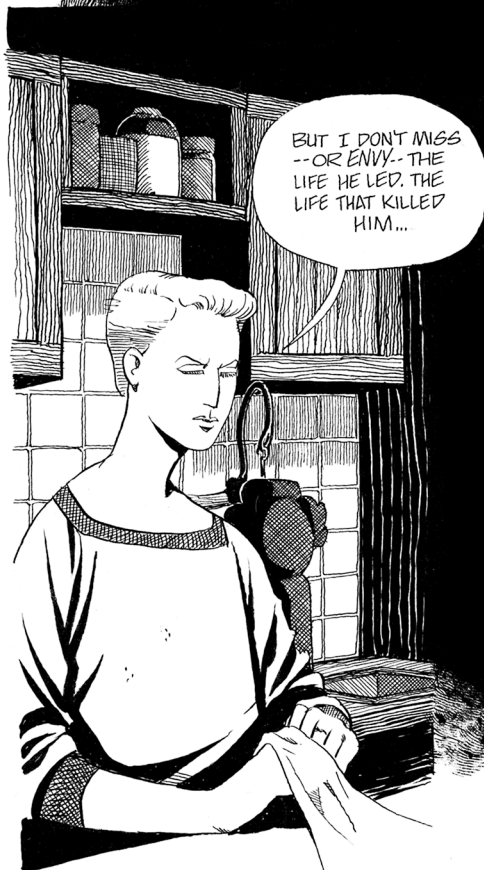


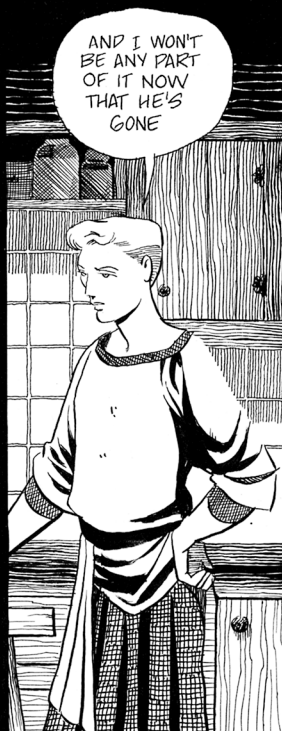










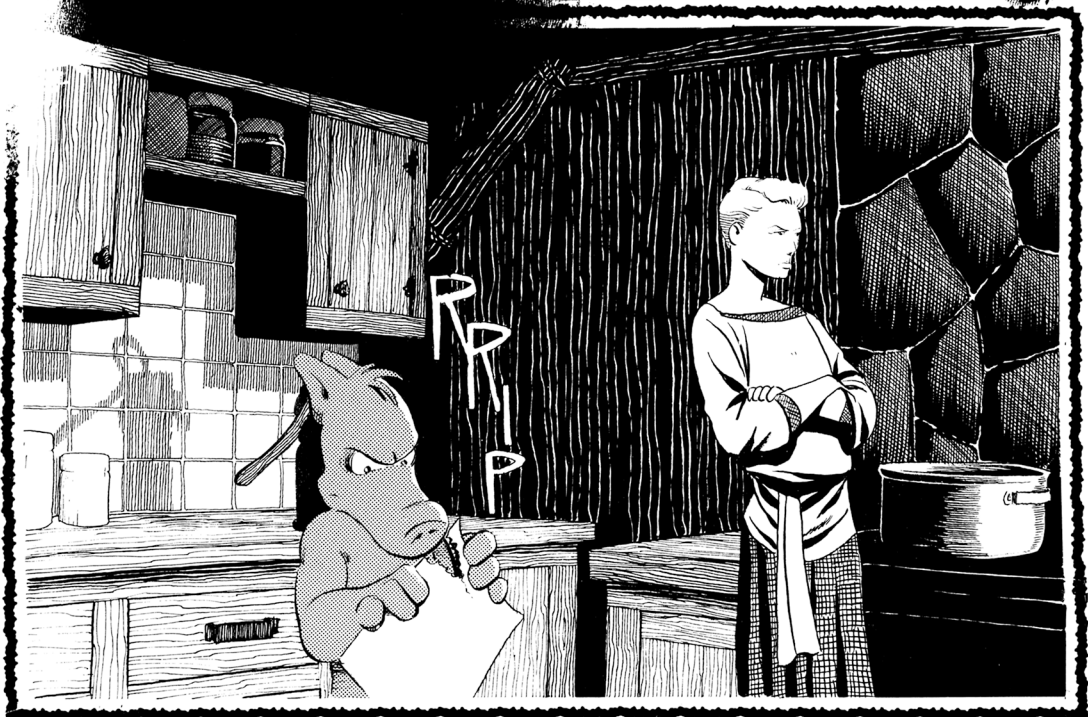
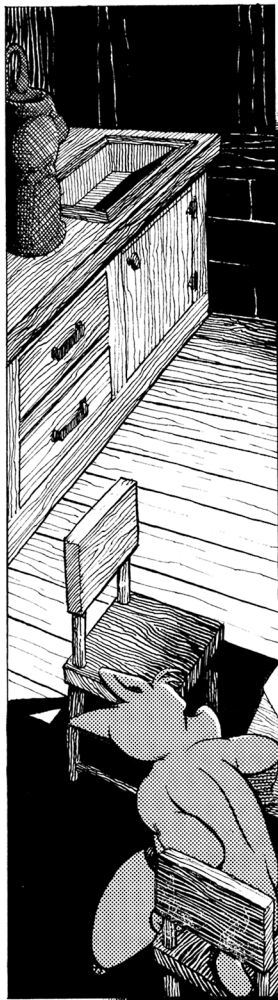


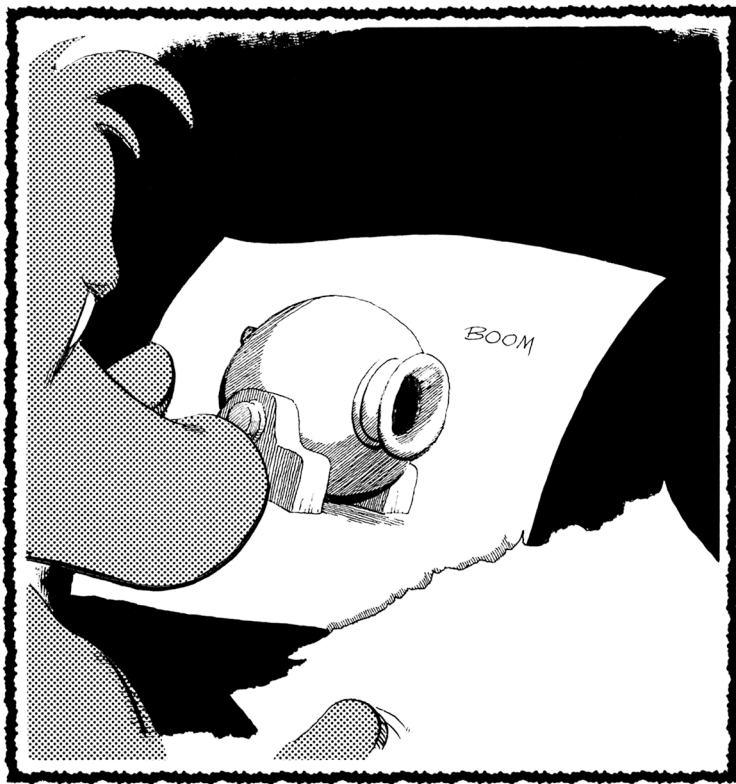




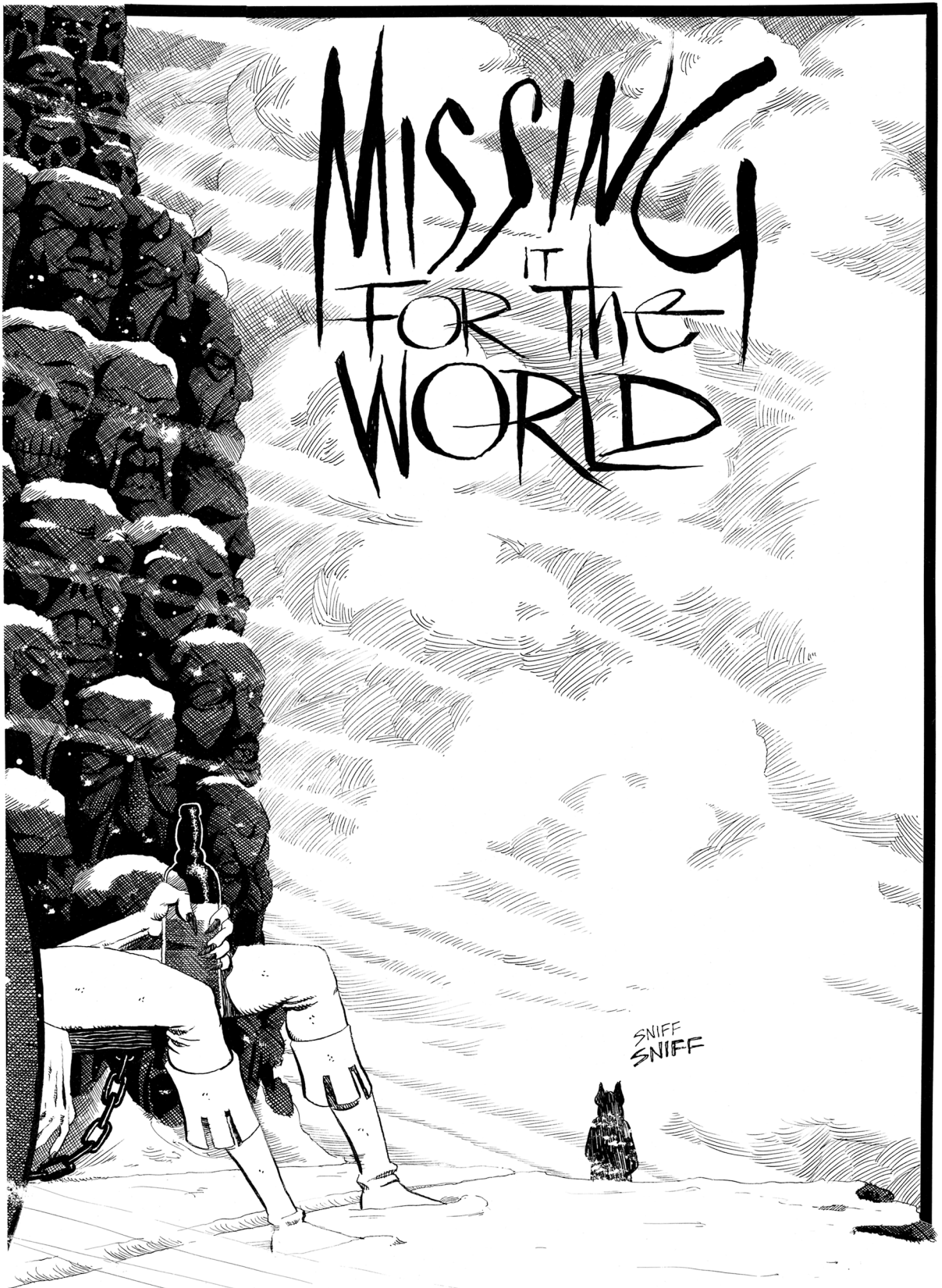


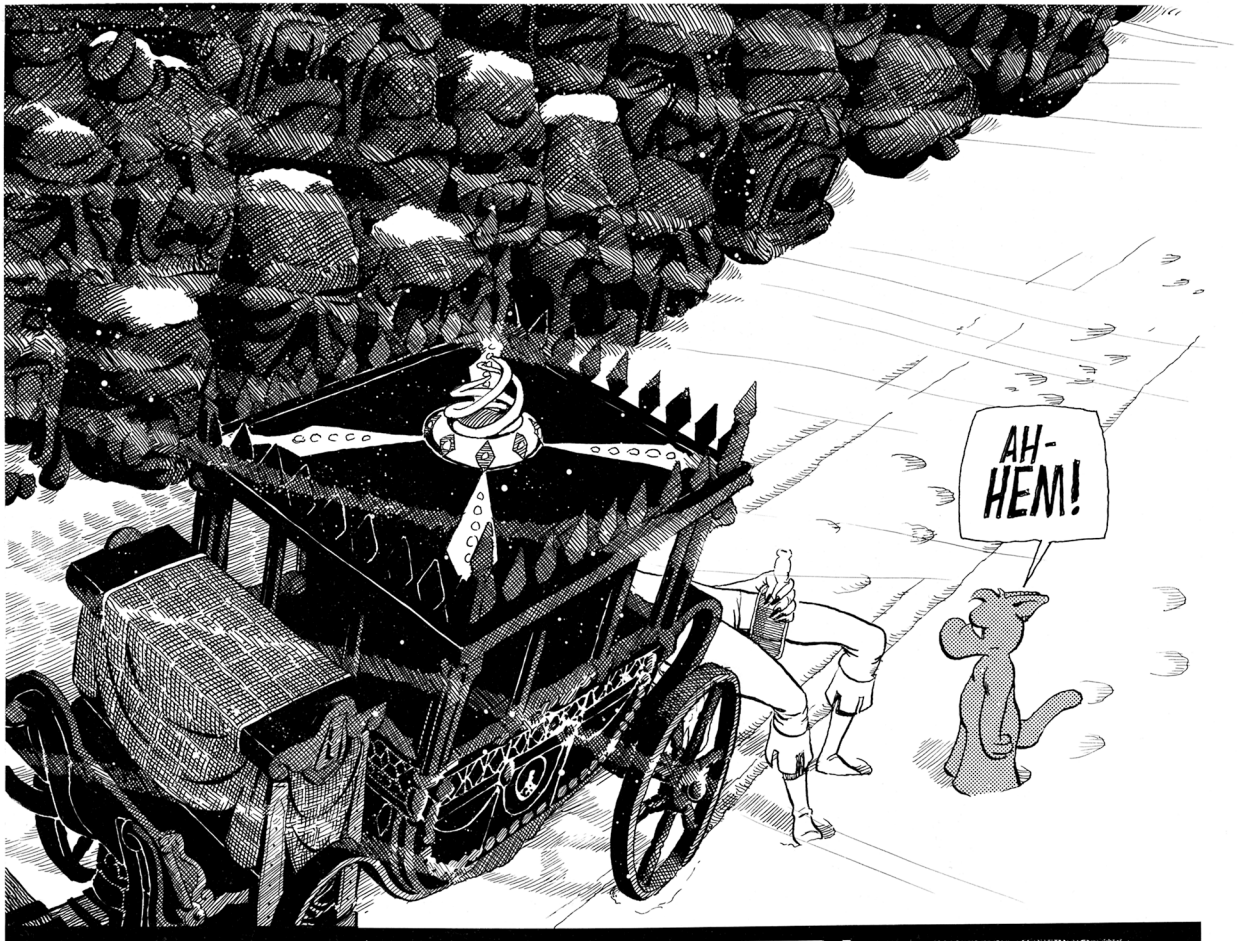




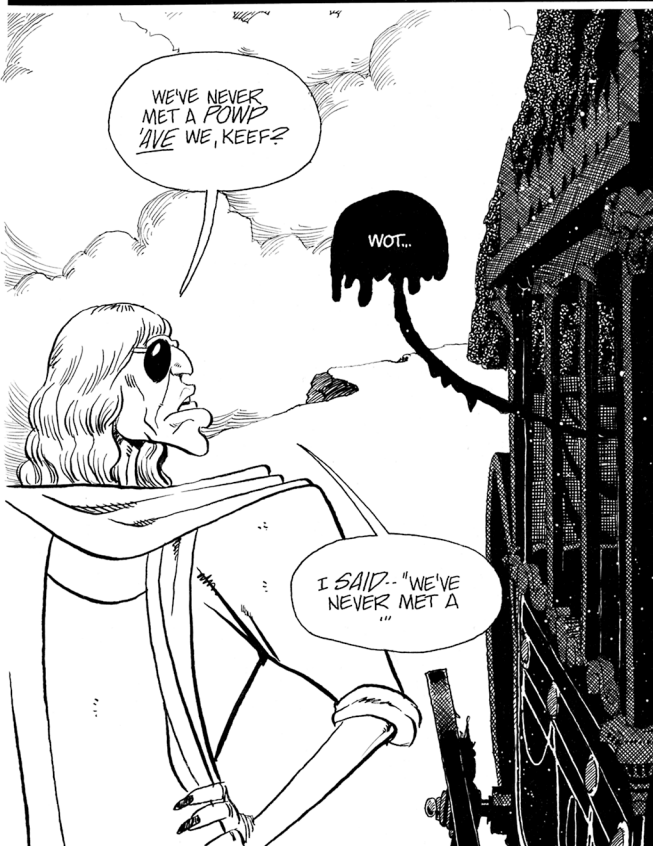


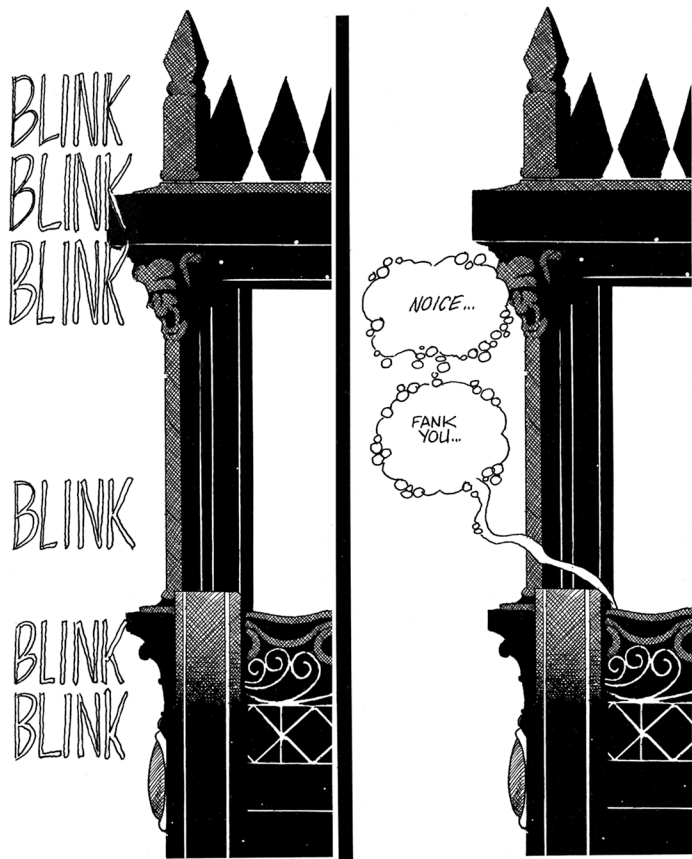
MISSING IT FOR THE WORLD

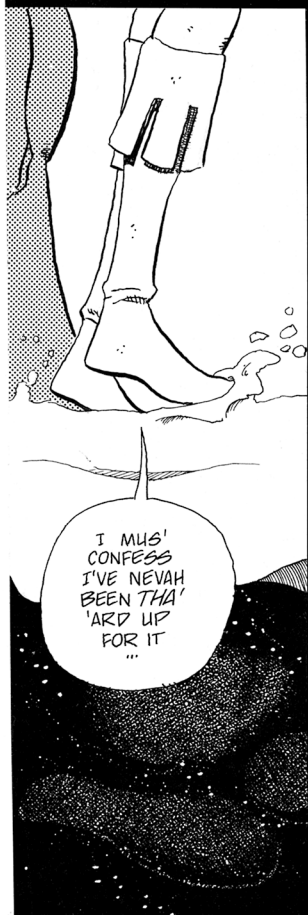
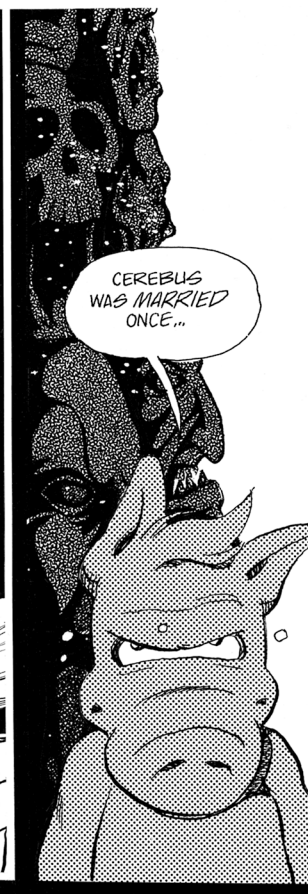


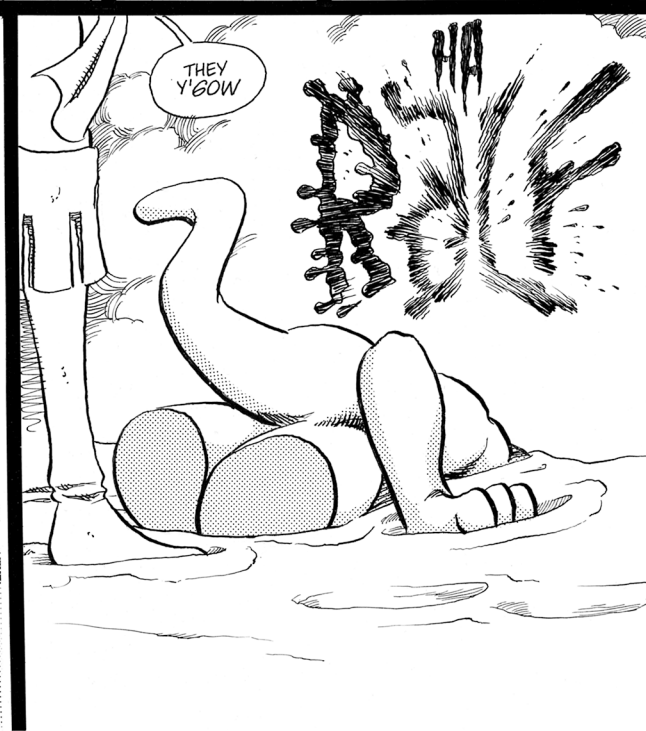
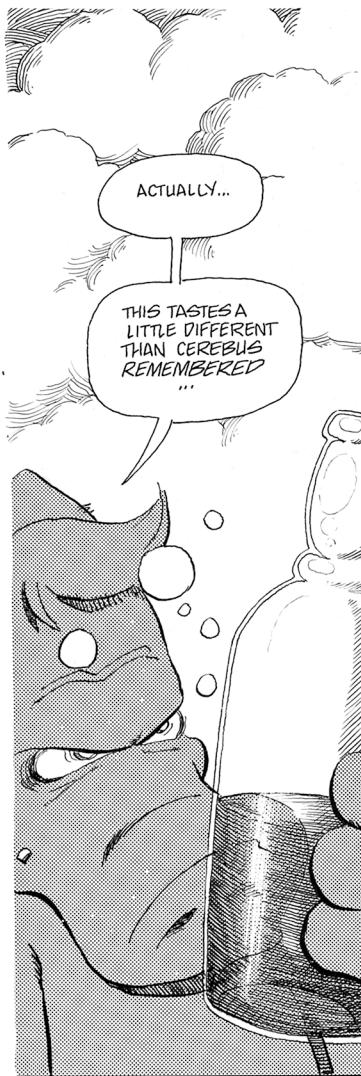


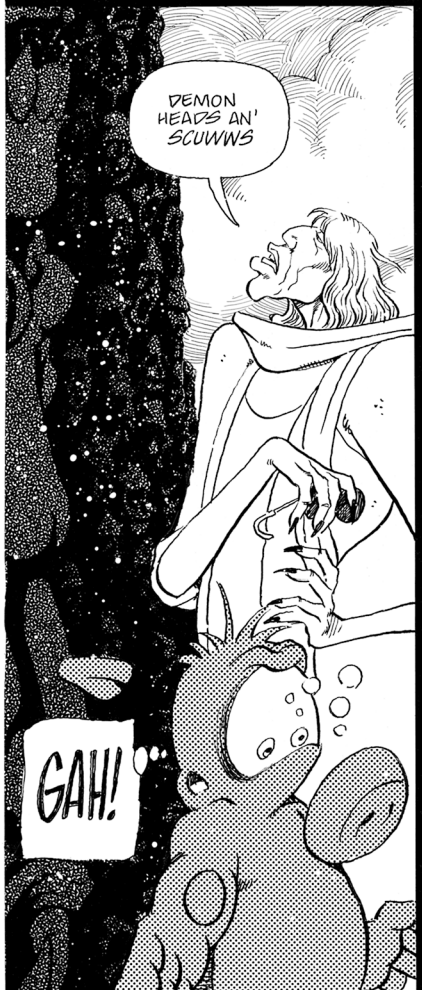




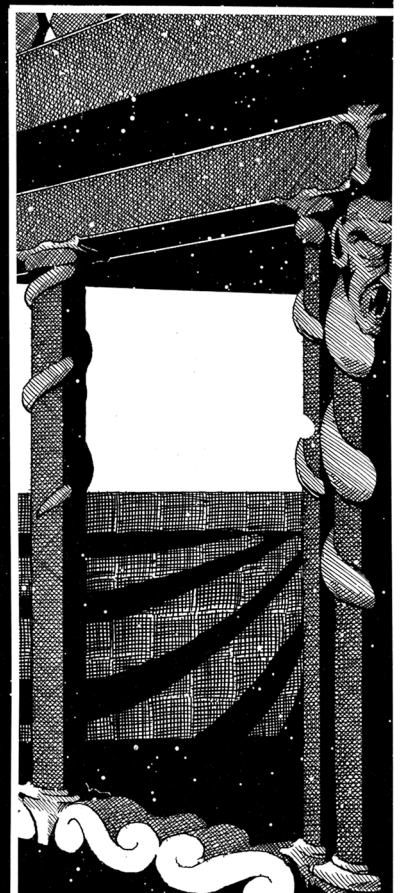


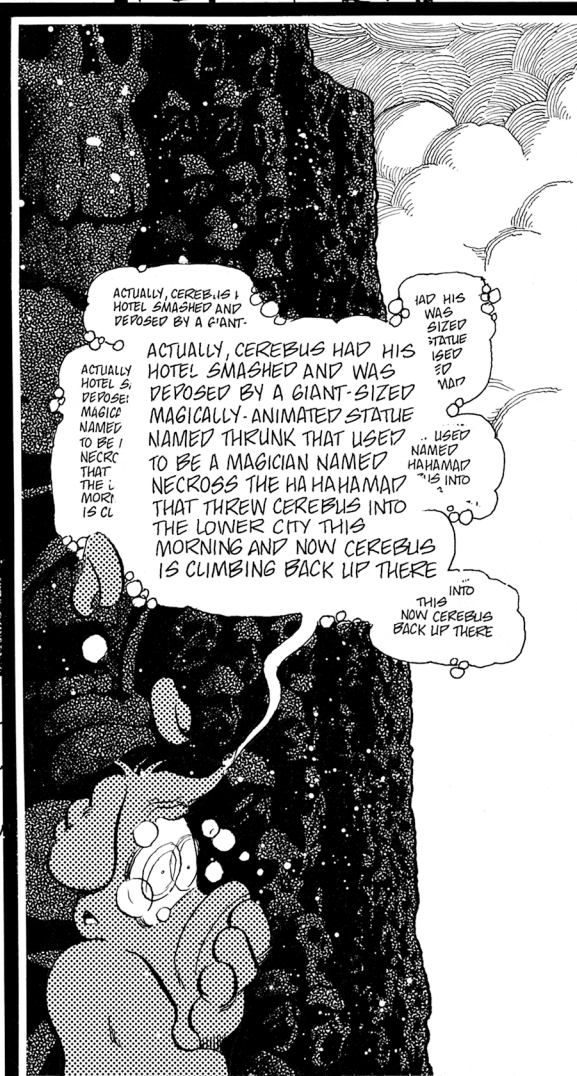
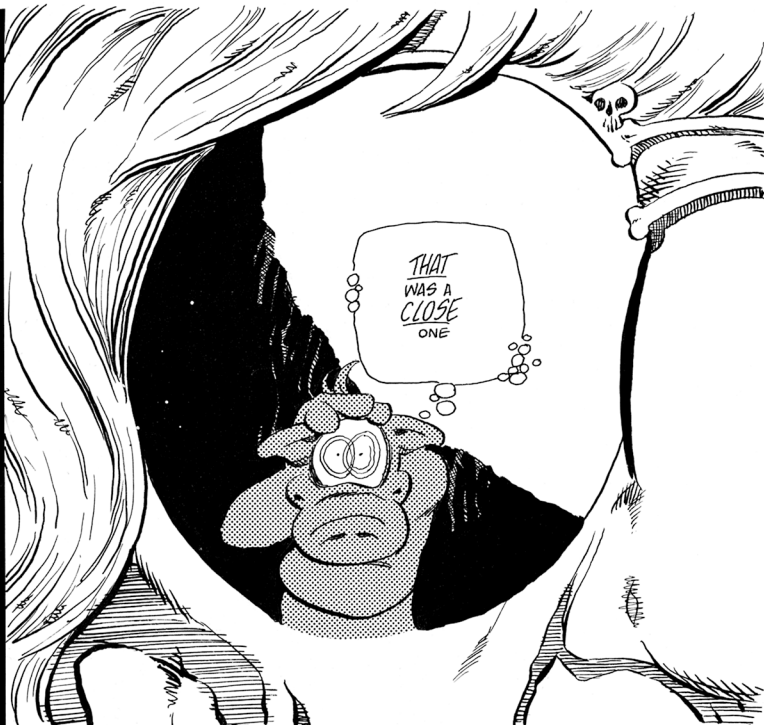
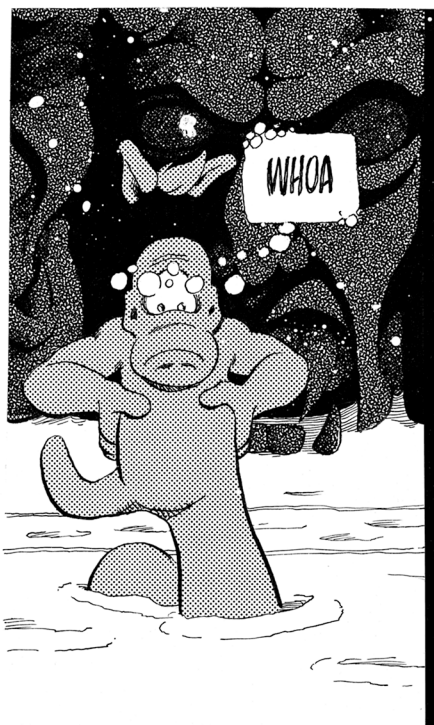




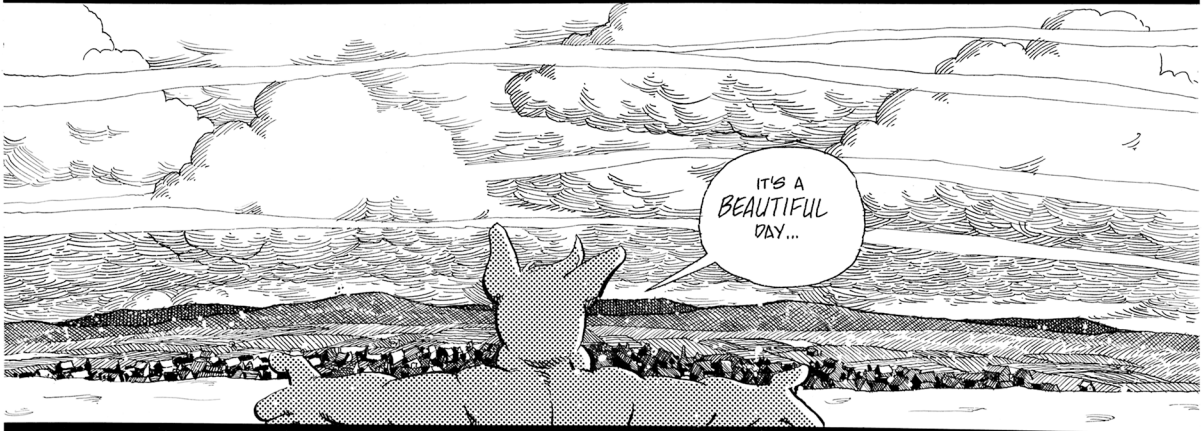


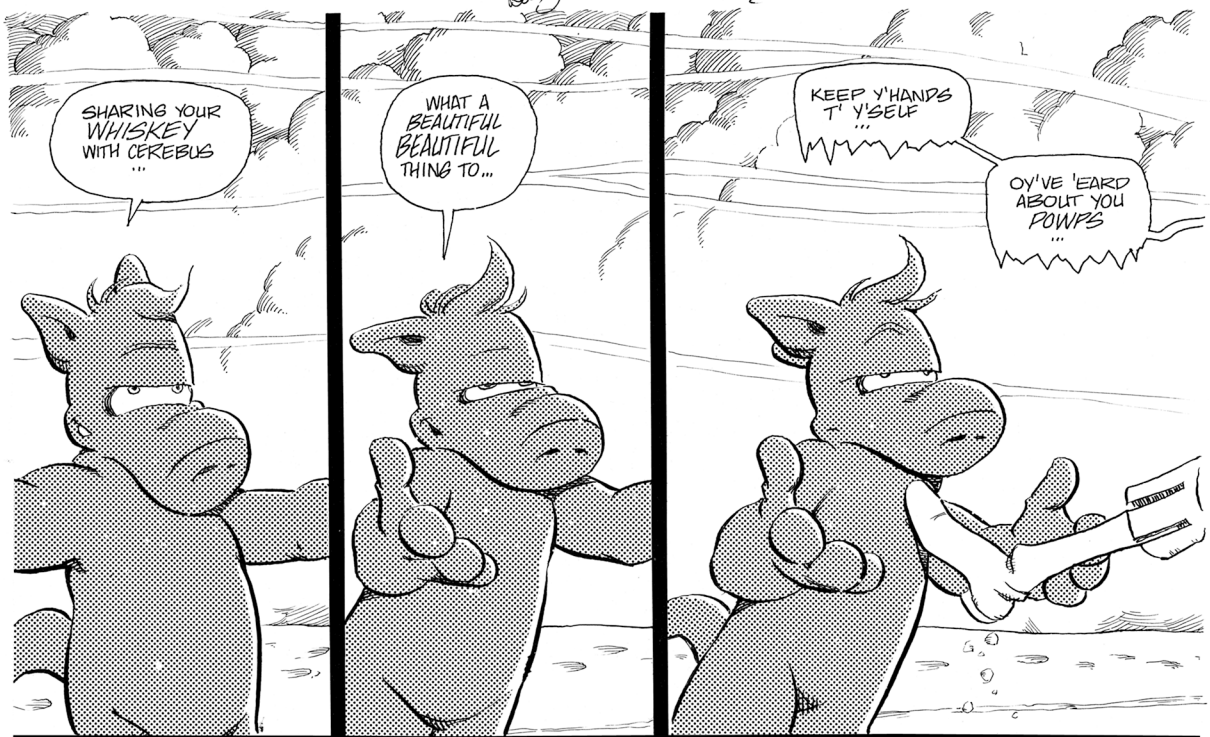




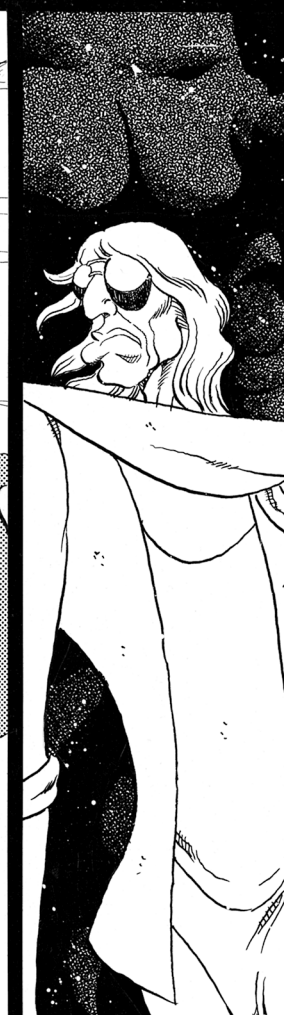
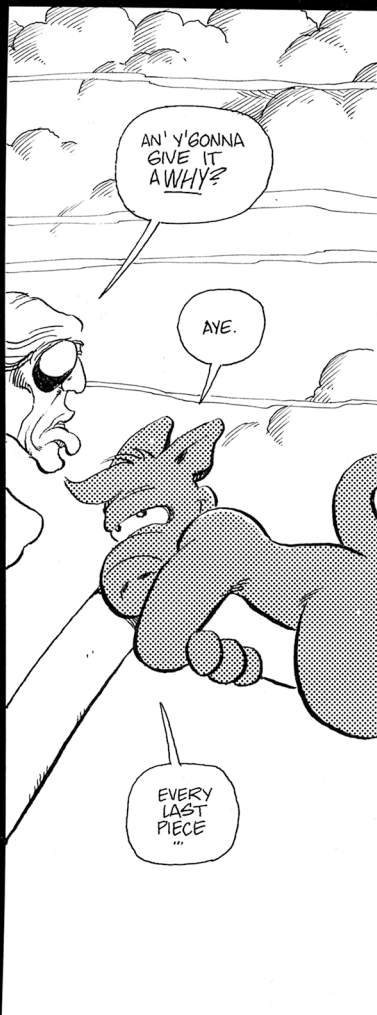




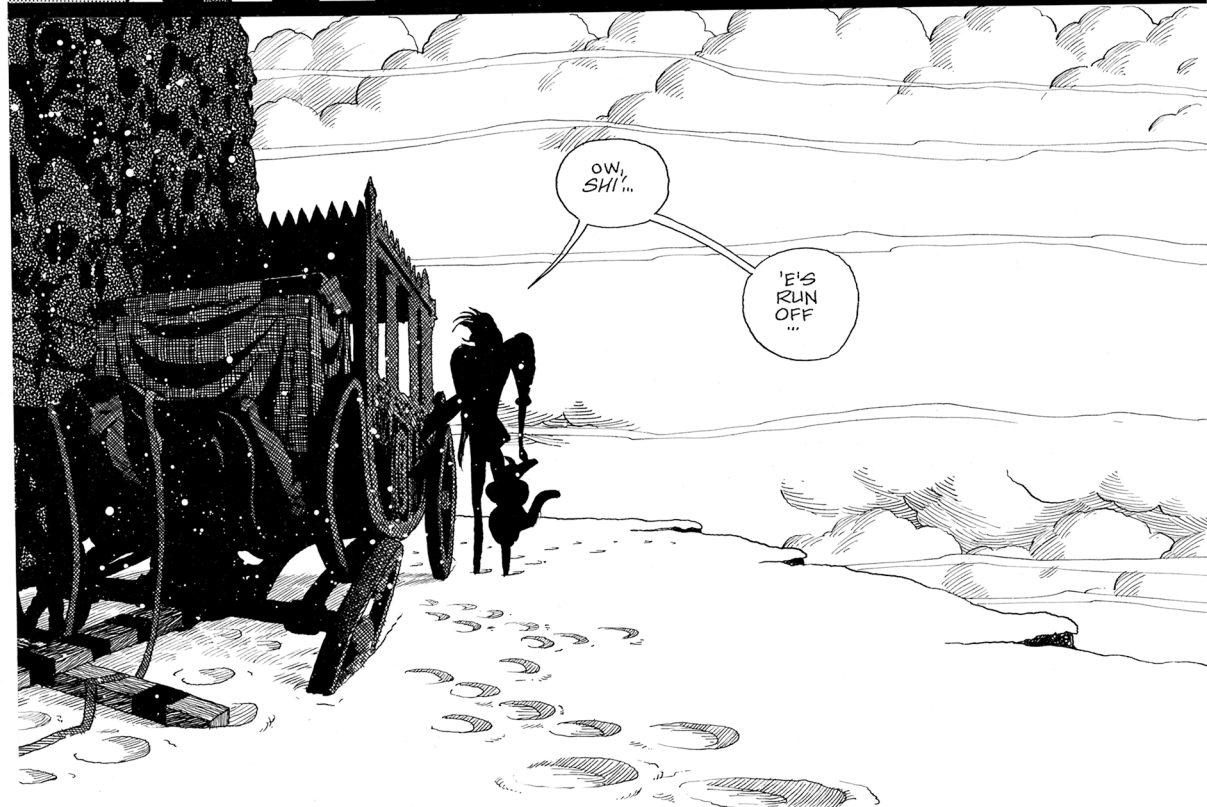
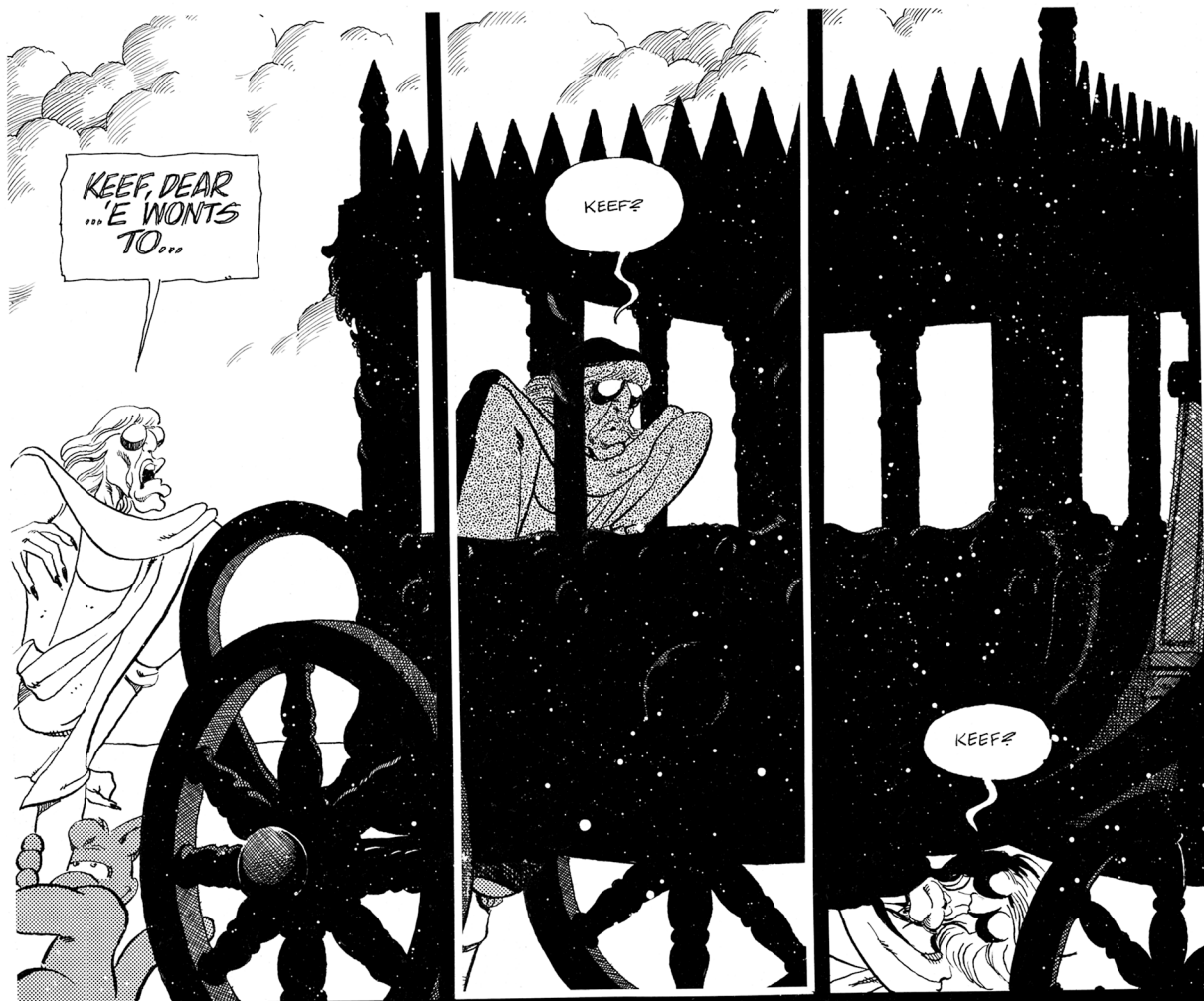




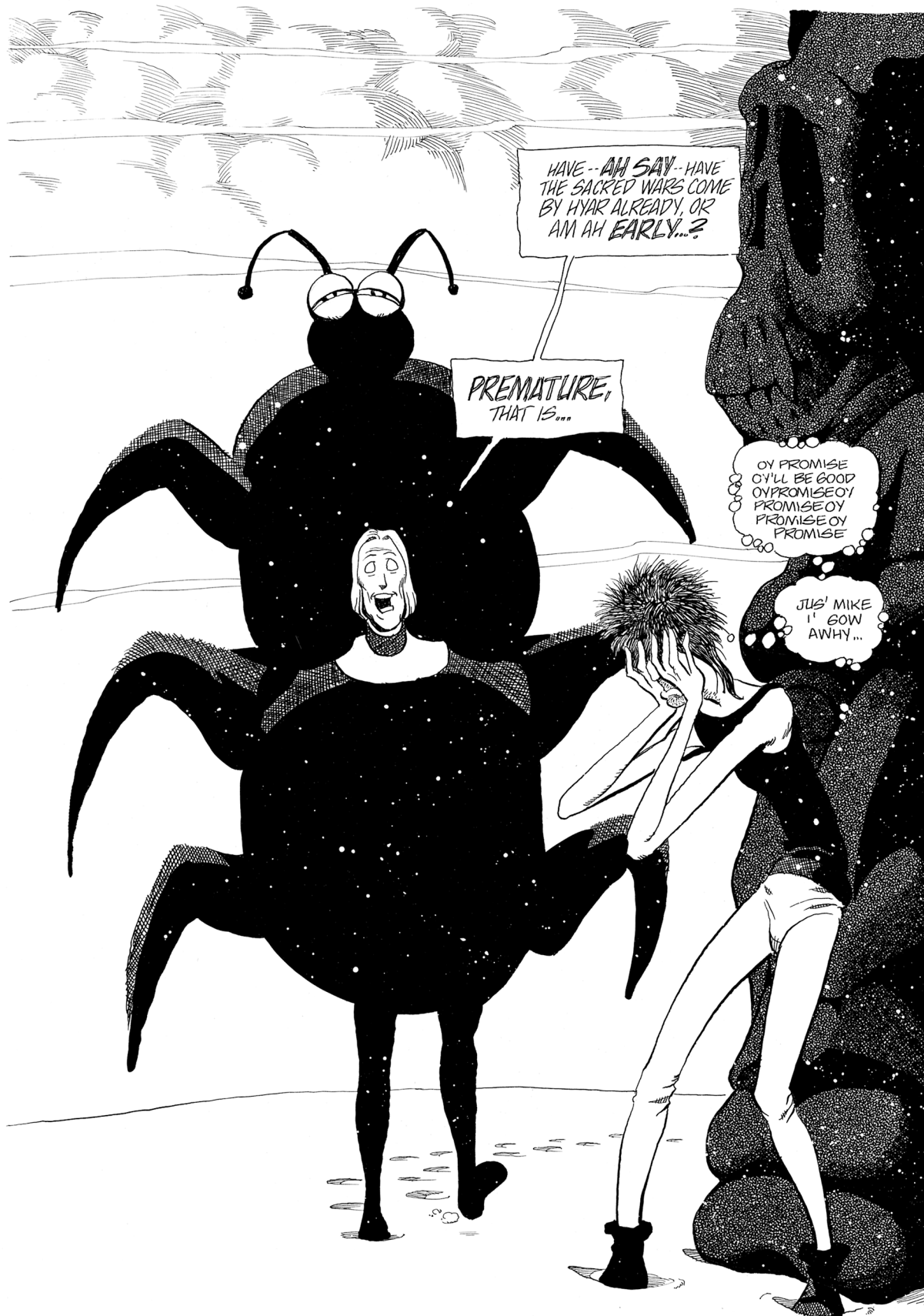












NEXT: ON THE BRINK OF EXISTENCE





'OW
D'Y' MEANZ



SEEN' FINGS

GOIANT
BUGS

I..I SAY.. I
TRIED TO TELL
HIM, SON.. BUT
HE THINKS I'M
A FIGMENT OF
HIS IMAGINATION

WIF A TALKIN'
'EAD WHERE 'IS
BELLY OURGHT
T'BE



AUDIO-
VISUAL,
THAT 'IS



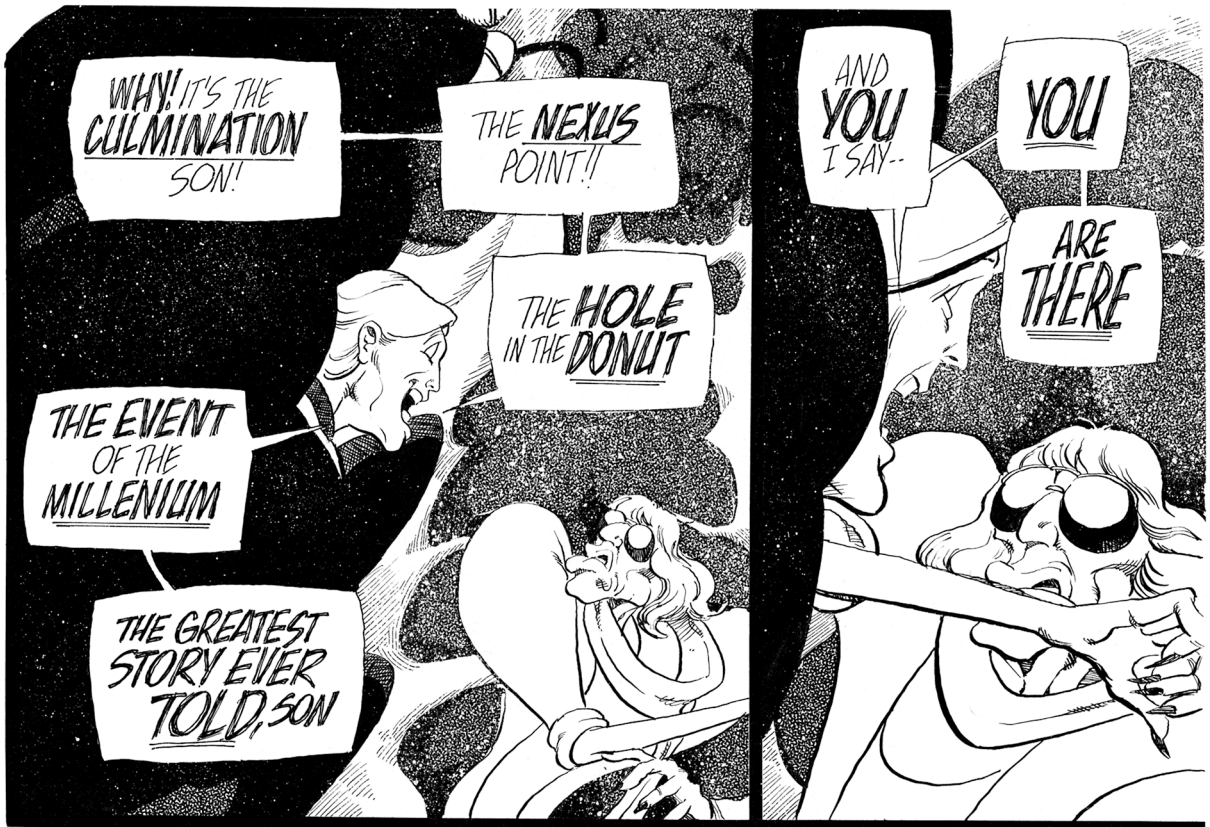
SO ARE YOU
BOYS IN TOWN
FOR TH' SECRET
SACRED WARS?

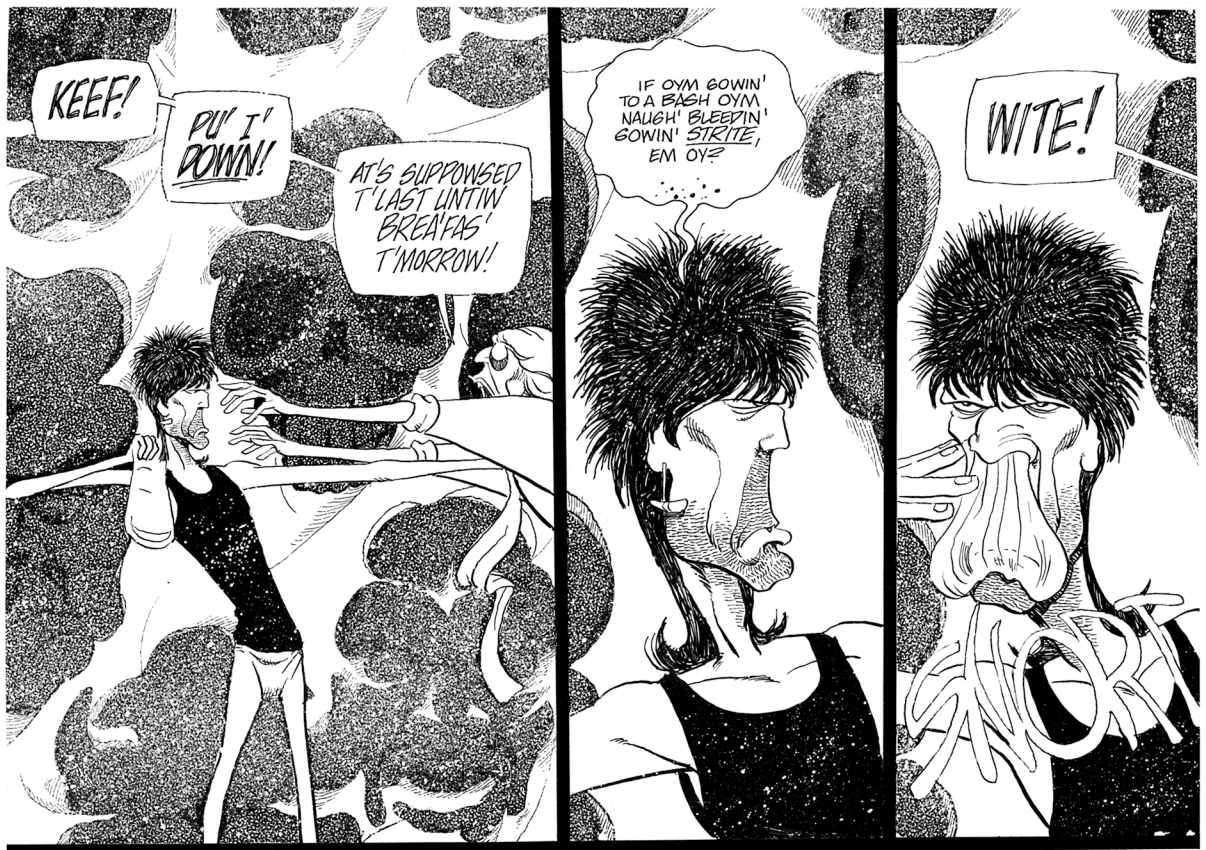
SECRE'
SICRE'
WOESZ

WOT'S
ATZ



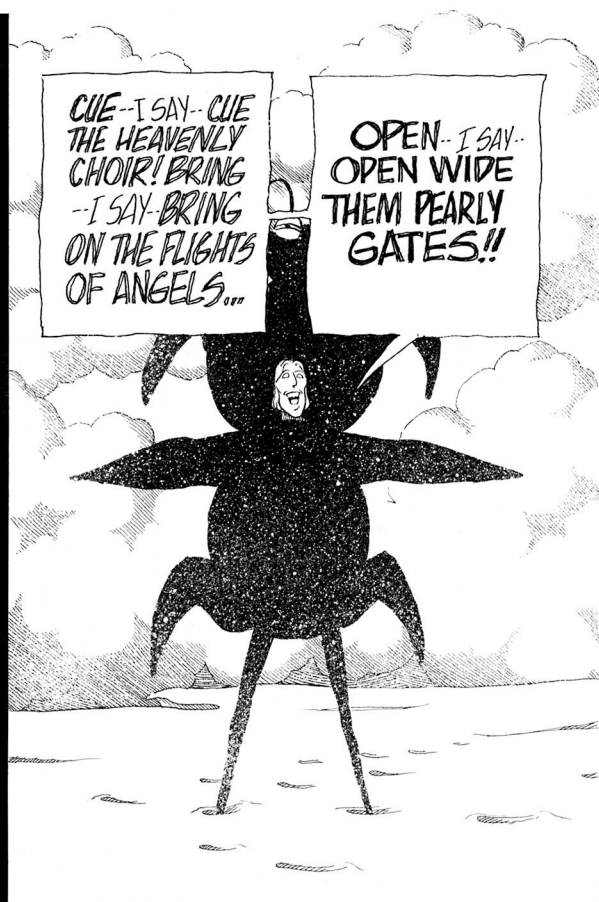
"WHAT" -- I SAY..
"WHAT ARE TH'
SECRET
SACRED
WARS"?!?













THAPOCK

'OW MUCH
GOWLD DID
YOU SIGH
YOU 'AD?

THAPOCK

OODLES
AND
BOODLES
...

OY SHOULD WONT
TO BOY DROGS
WIF MOY 'ALF
...

IT SEEMS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT
THE FROSTINITE SUMMER THAT
PRESIDENT WEISSHAUPT PREDICTED
HAS ARRIVED AND THAT THE SECRET
SACRED WARS HAVE REACHED A
GUT-WRENCHING, SPINE-TINGLING
CONCLUSION...

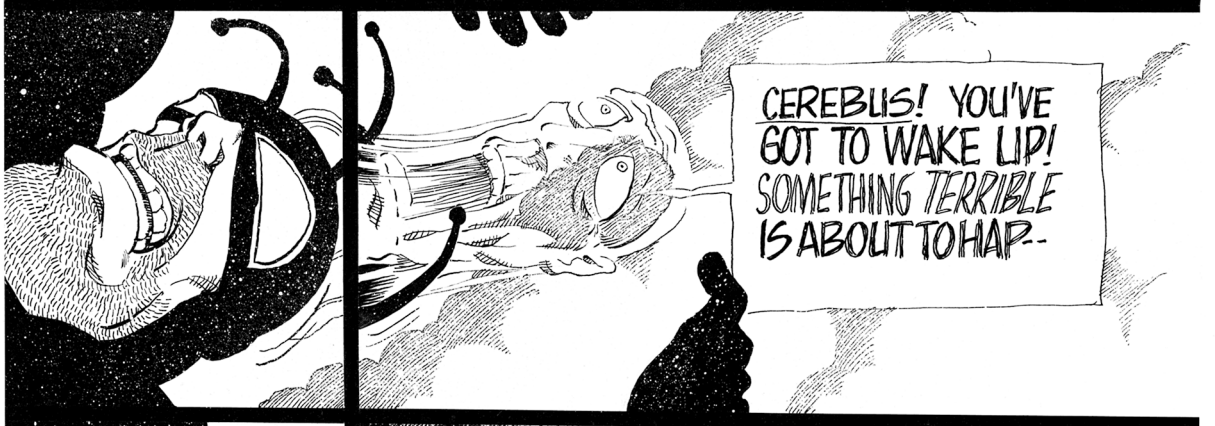
THE SECRET SACRED WARS
PRIESTESS ROACH AWAITS
MY ARRIVAL AT THE HOTEL
AND I HAVE ONLY TO BESTEPOP
THE ANTI-POPE IN A BATTLE TO
THE DEATH AND SHE WILL BE
MINE...

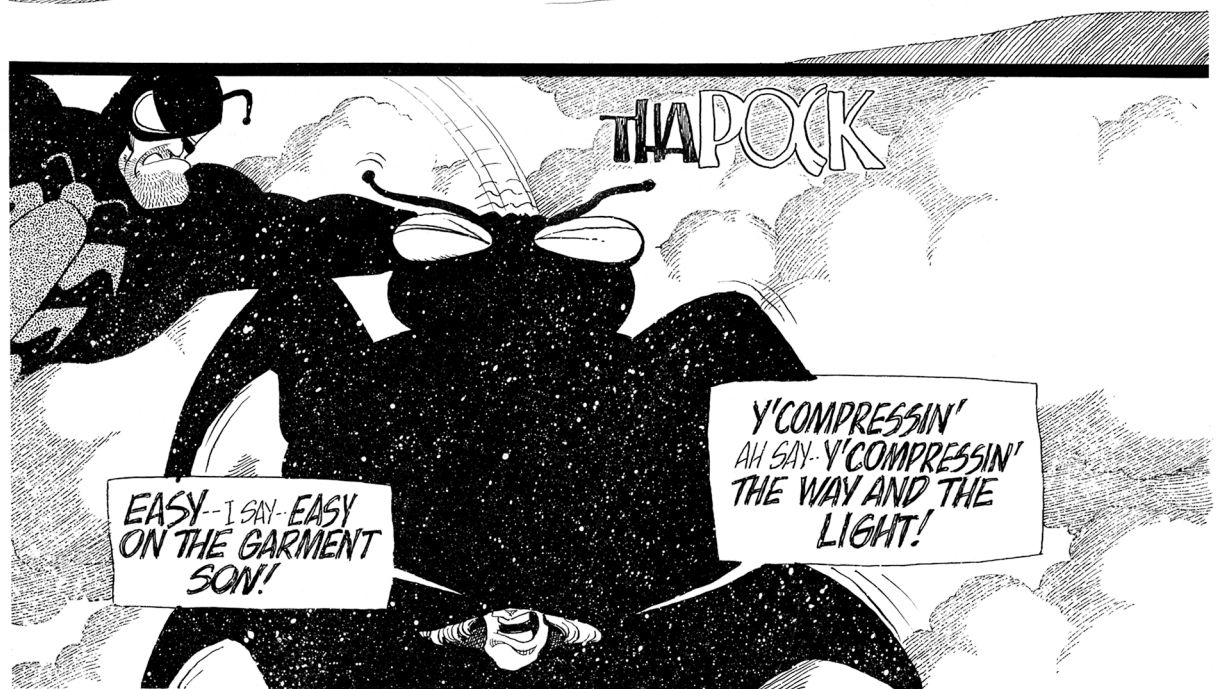
THAPOCK

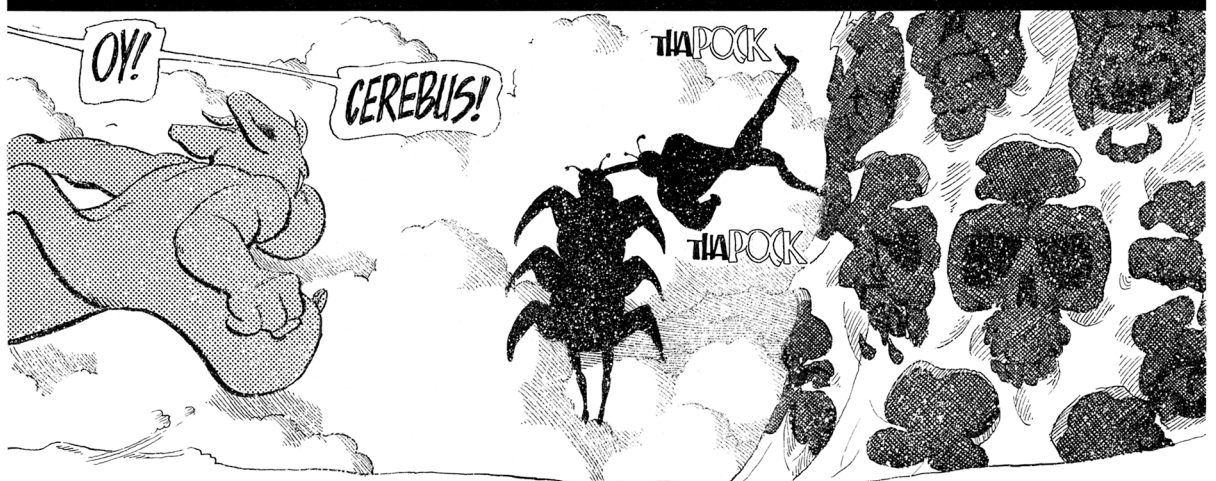
THAPOCK

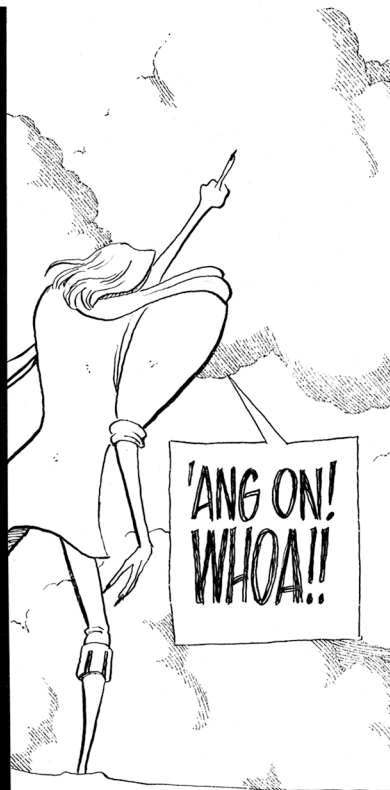
HOW FOOLISH I WAS TO THINK
SHE WOULD CARE FOR A RINTY
POPE OR A HALF-PINT PRIME
MINISTER WHEN SHE IS FATED
TO BE A MESSIAH'S MAIN
SQUEEZE...


BUT FOR NOW I MUST
THINK OF THE TASK AHEAD
AND MUSTER EVERY LAST
OUNCE OF CLAREMONT...











I-- I FEEL A STRANGE
SECRET SACRED WARS
CALM DESCEND ON ME...
BRINGING A SECRET SACRED
WARS LUMP TO MY THROAT
...

THAPOCK

THE FINAL ASCENSION IS
AT HAND. HOW MANY
CROSS-OVERS AND TIE-
IN'S HAVE LED TO THIS
MOMENT. HOW ODD THAT
IT IS THE SECRET SACRED
WARS ROACH WHO PREVAILS
...

THAPOCK


THAPOCK

RIGHT, THEN!
WE'LL MEET YOU
AT THE 'OTEL
...

BUG!

STOP!

YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
...



THERE IS TIME FOR ONE
LAST PITYING GLANCE
BACKWARD AT THE HAPLESS
FORMER PRIME MINISTER,
FORMER POPE WHO IS ABOUT
TO LOSE ASTORIA TO ME
FOREVER...

HE CLIMBS QUICKLY
BUT IS NO MATCH FOR
THE MYSTERIOUS SUPER-
ADHESIVE OF MY SECRET
SACRED WARS SUIT...

**BUG! SHUT
UP AND LISTEN
TO CEREBUS!**

DAMN YOU
BUG
...

SWITCHING
BUNKY TO HIS
RIGHT HAND, THE
SECRET SACKED
WARPS ROACH
MUSES ALOUD

GAH!

HOW ODD TO THINK THAT
I USED TO CONSIDER
HIM AN UNBEATABLE
RIVAL. NOW THAT MY
POWER EXCEEDS HIS

...I CAN'T
HELP BUT FEEL
SORRY FOR
HIM...

HEH
HEH
HEH

BUG!
LISTEN!

SOON, ALL OF THE GOLD
IN IEST WILL BE MINE--
THE POWER THAT ESCAPED
WEISSHAUPT ALL OF HIS
LIFE WILL BE AT MY
DISPOSAL...

SOON, THE PEOPLE WILL REALIZE
THAT I HAVE ALWAYS WALKED
AMONG THEM AS THE MERELY
MAGNIFICENT MOON ROACH,
SERGEANT PRESTON ROACH AND
LATER AS THE PURELY PLATONIC
PRIEST ROACH

HOW FOOLISH THEY
WILL ALL FEEL WHEN
THEY REALIZE THAT
THEY ALMOST LET ME
SLIP THROUGH THEIR
FINGERS

WHAT SAY, SON?
SLIP THROUGH
WHOSE FINGERS?

TIGHTEN--I SAY--
TIGHTEN Y'GRIP
SON!

TO BE TARIM IN
HIS EARTHLY INCARNATION
... IT IS A GRAVE AND
IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY
THAT WOULD PROVE TO
BE TOO MUCH FOR A
LESSER CLAREMONT

BUG



CEREBUS!
DON'T LET
HIM REACH
THE GOLD!

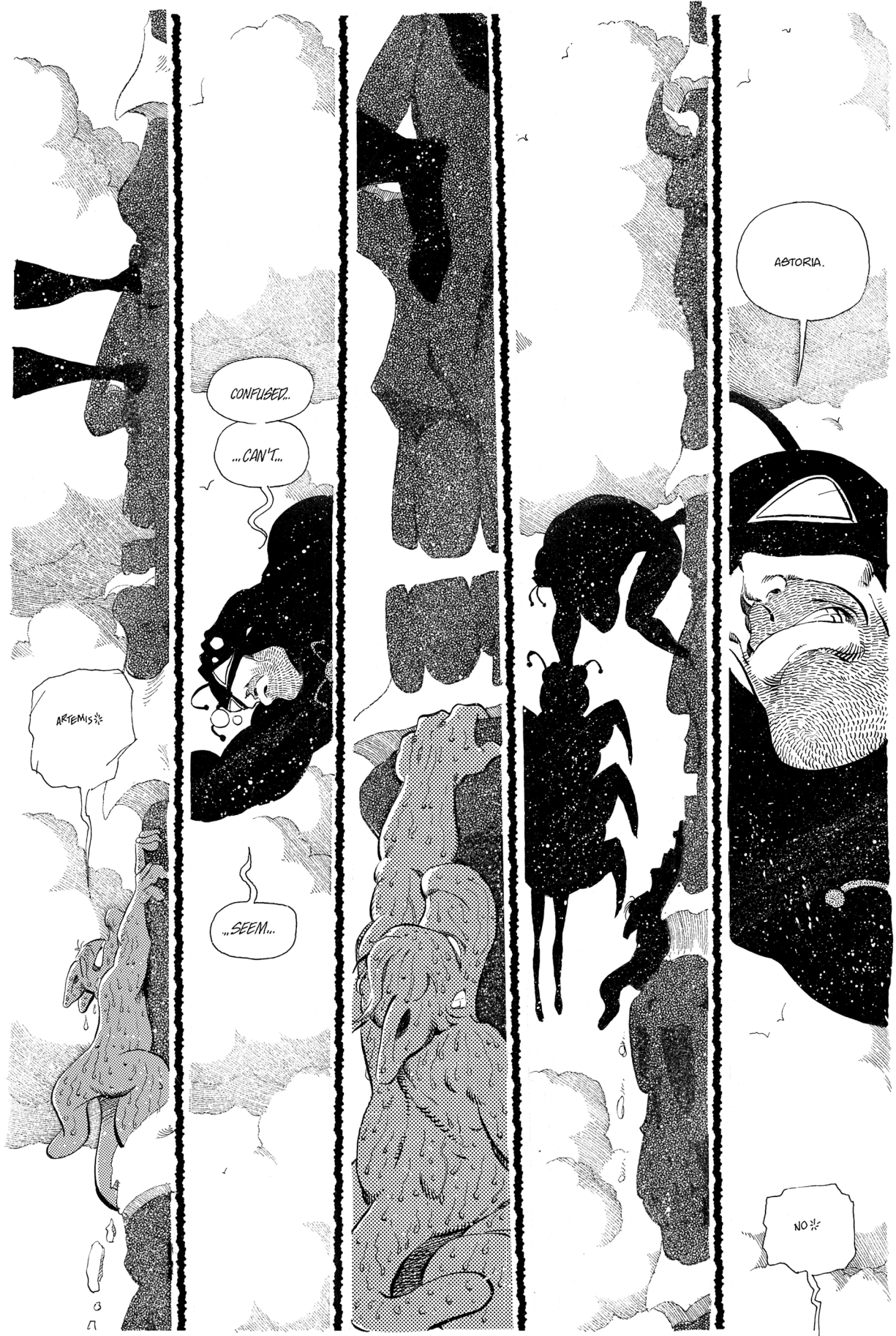


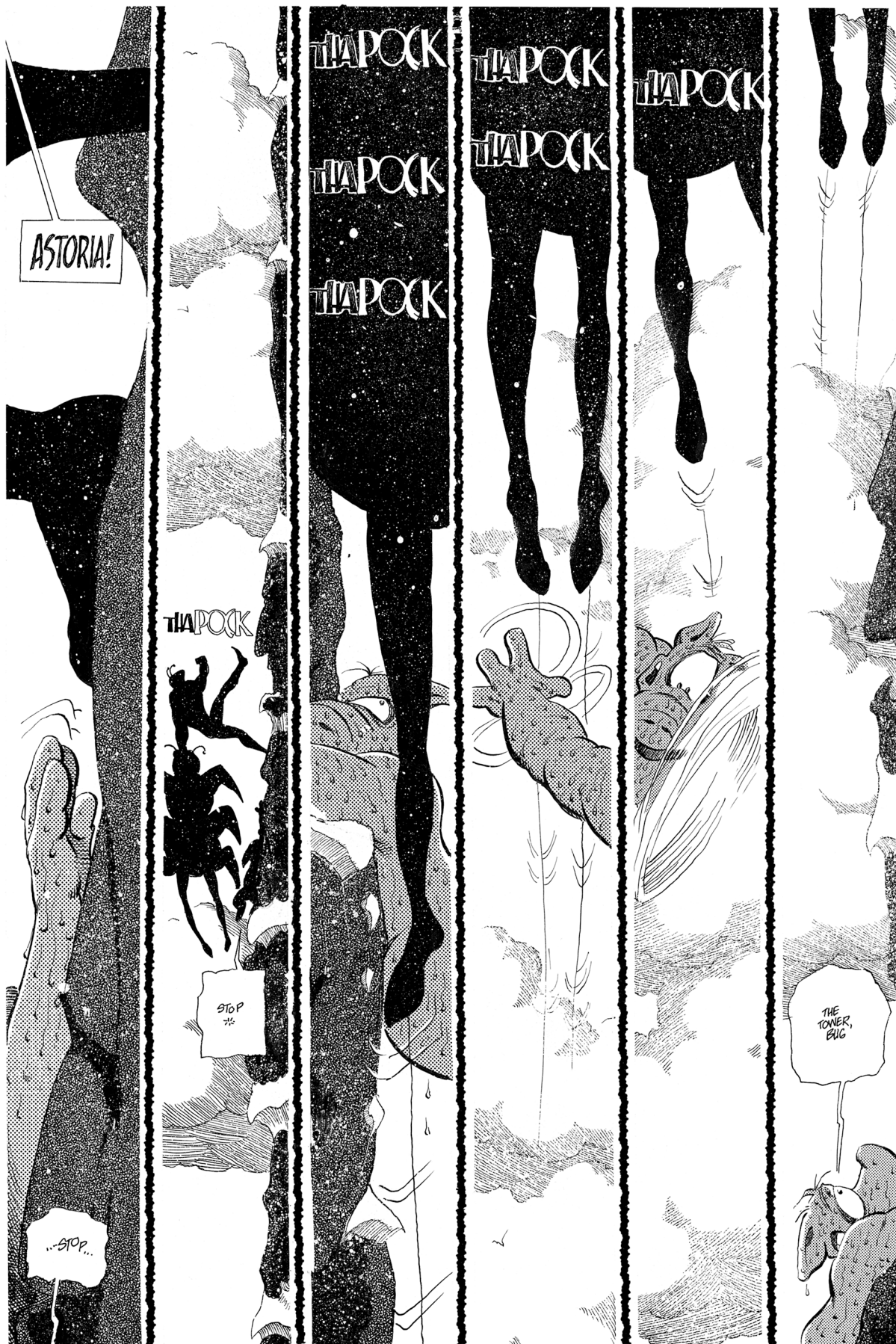
THE BLACK
TOWER! IT'S
GROWING!
YOU HAVE
TO STOP

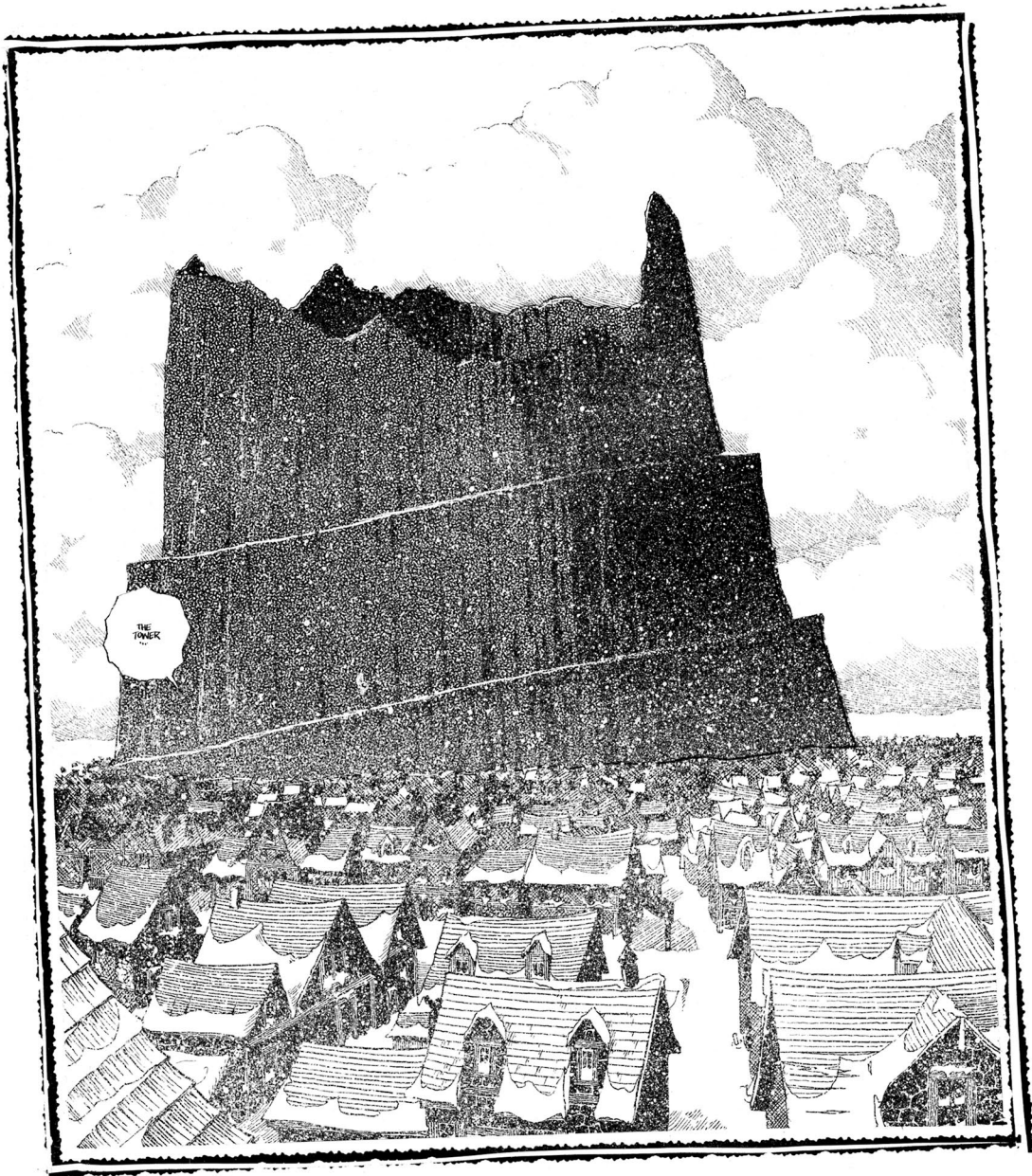


MMMF
MMMF
MMMF

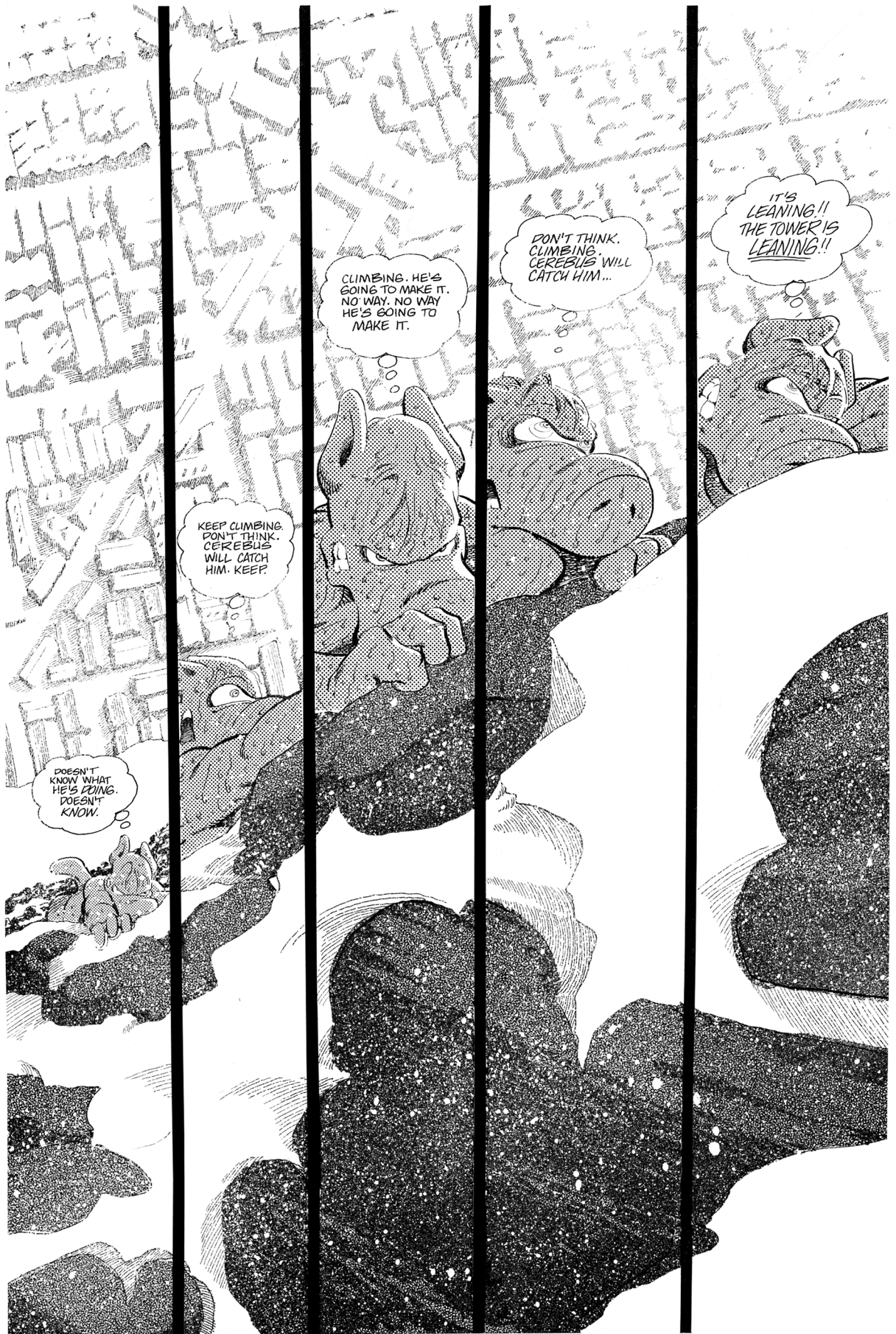








NEXT: ambivalent obsessions



TOWERS

...THE CLOSEST SECRET SACRED WARS CALL YET. CAN'T FORGET ABOUT THE GOLD THAT WEISSHAUPT TOLD ME HAS POWERS TO GRANT MY DEEPEST SECRET SACRED HEART'S DESIRE AND BRING EVERLASTING PEACE TO THE SCUM WHO LAUGHED AT MY TIGHTS ALL THESE SECRET SACRED YEARS...

JUST-AH SAY-JUST A COTTON-PICKIN' MINUTE, SON-Y SCENARIO IS RIGHT BUT Y'VE MISCAST IT! WRONG LEADING MAN, THAT IS...

IT'S-AH SAY-IT'S THE DAWNING OF THE AGE OF THE ALBINO!!

EVERYONE DIES...

EVERYONE.

analogous

I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL SORRY FOR BUNKY-ROACH. EVEN AS THE SECRET SACRED WARS TRANSFORM HIM INTO ONE OF THE CHOSEN ROACHES, HE DENIES HIS ONE TRUE SECRET SACRED WARS DESTINY...

IT'S-AH SAY IT'S A COSTUME, SON...

IT'S ALL BLACK FELT AND EIDER DOWN, SON--
STUFFING, THAT IS...

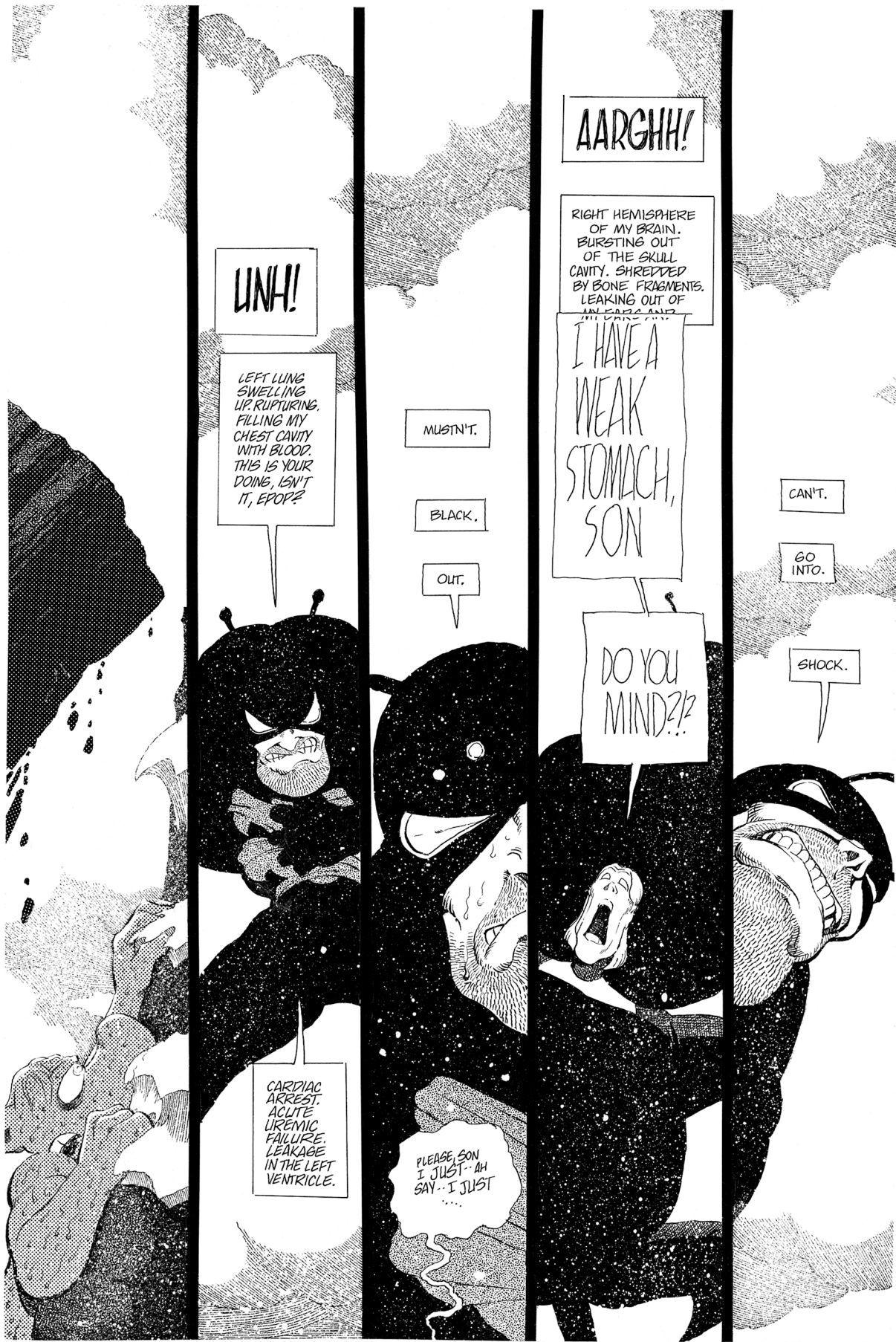
SO, EPOP-- YOU CONTINUE YOUR
SECRET SACRED CORRUPTION
OF MY FOLLOWERS COMPELLING
THEM TO COMMIT SECRET SACRED
VIOLENCE UPON THEMSELVES

ONCE AND FOR ALL, I VOW TO
BREAK YOUR HOLD ON THE
HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE
NEW SECRET SACRED GEN-
ERATION OF ROACHES THAT
THEY MIGHT KNOW TRUE
FREEDOM AS MY UNQUESTIONING
ADHERENTS...

YOU'RE
BROKEN,
EPOP

AND I'M
GOING TO
FIX YOU...

WITH MY
FAITH AND
HANDS



UHH!

LEFT LUNG
SWELLING
UP. RUPTURING.
FILLING MY
CHEST CAVITY
WITH BLOOD.
THIS IS YOUR
DOING, ISN'T
IT, EPOP?

MUSTN'T.

BLACK.

OUT.

AARGHH!

RIGHT HEMISPHERE
OF MY BRAIN.
BURSTING OUT
OF THE SKULL
CAVITY. SHREPPED
BY BONE FRAGMENTS.
LEAKING OUT OF
MY EARS AND

I HAVE A
WEAK
STOMACH,
SON

CAN'T.

GO
INTO.

DO YOU
MIND?!!

SHOCK.

CARDIAC
ARREST.
ACUTE
UREMIC
FAILURE.
LEAKAGE
IN THE LEFT
VENTRICLE.

PLEASE, SON
I JUST... AH
SAY... I JUST
....

BREATHE
DEEP. FLEX.

COUNT TO
TEN.

HUNCH
OVER.

SQUINT.

CLOSE-
UP.

WE'RE ALL
COCKROACHES,
EPOP...

WE'VE ALWAYS
BEEN COCKROACHES

WE HAVE
TO BE
COCKROACHES

WE LOVE
BEING
COCKROACHES

EVEN JASON
LOVED BEING
A COCKROACH...

YOU'VE LOST
ME, SON...

WHO...
I SAY
WHO
IS JASON?

CLIMBING
KEEP
CLIMBING
...

DON'T.

EVER.

SAY.

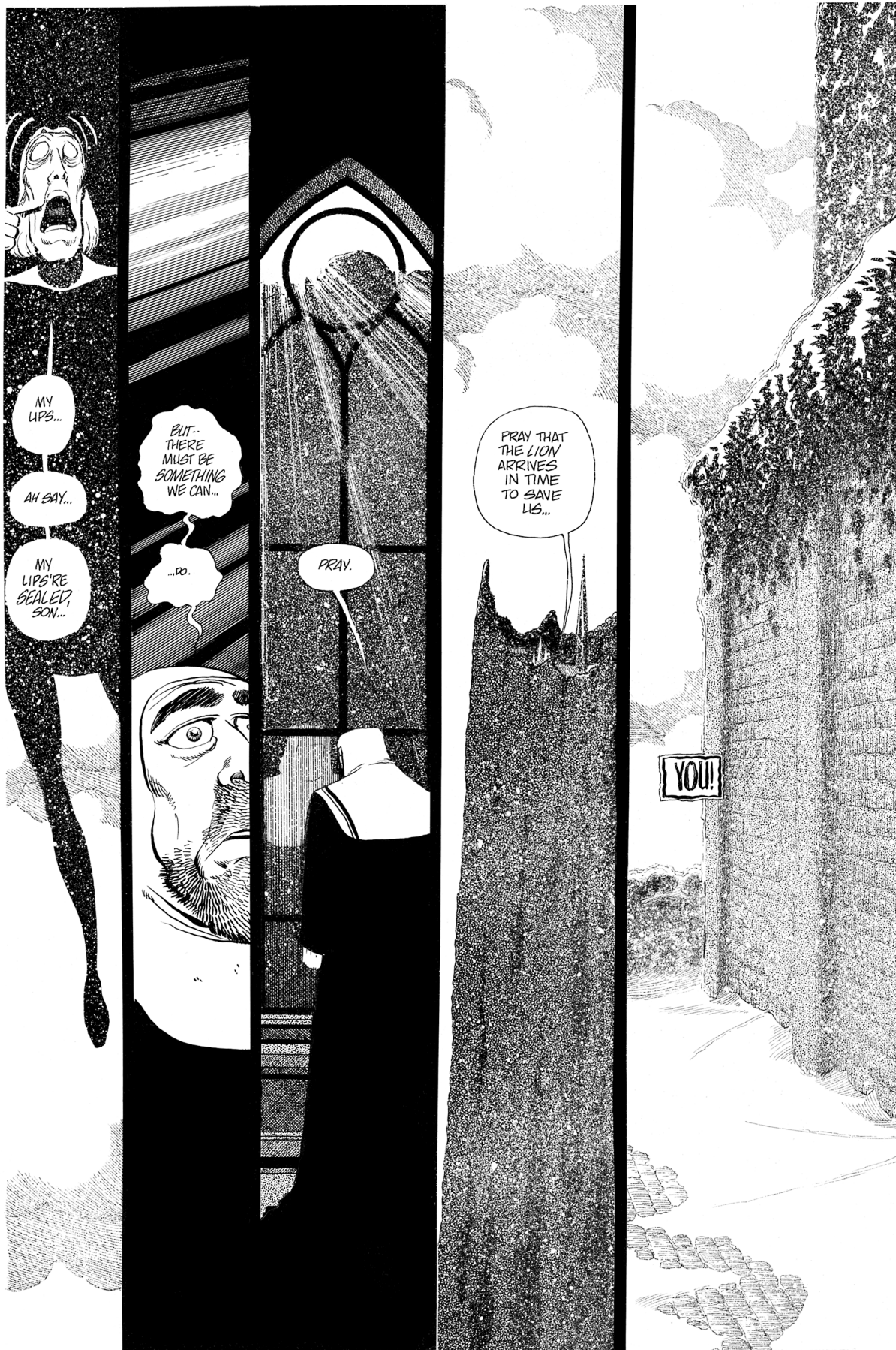
THAT.

NAME.

BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM

UNDERSTAND?!

BAD
SOLDIER!



MY LIPS...

AH SAY...

MY LIPS'RE SEALED, SON...

BUT--
THERE MUST BE
SOMETHING
WE CAN...

...DO.

PRAY.

PRAY THAT
THE LION
ARRIVES
IN TIME
TO SAVE
US...

YOU!



YOU'RE SLACKING!
I TOLD YOU I
WOULDN'T TOLERATE
SLACKING...

EXCUSES!
ALWAYS
EXCUSES

PLEASE, MOM - I ONLY HAVE
ONE BELL... I NEED AN HOUR TO
WORK AND DAD TOLD ME NOPE!
SORRY, CONSIDER

PLEASE, MOM - I ONLY HAVE
ONE BELL... I NEED AN HOUR TO
WORK AND DAD TOLD ME NOPE!
SORRY, CONSIDER

PLEASE TELL MY MOTHER
I'M EXPECTING AS WELL AND
ALL OF MY BROTHERS ARE
SICKLY AND CANNOT WORK OR
FEEL

SPLOK!

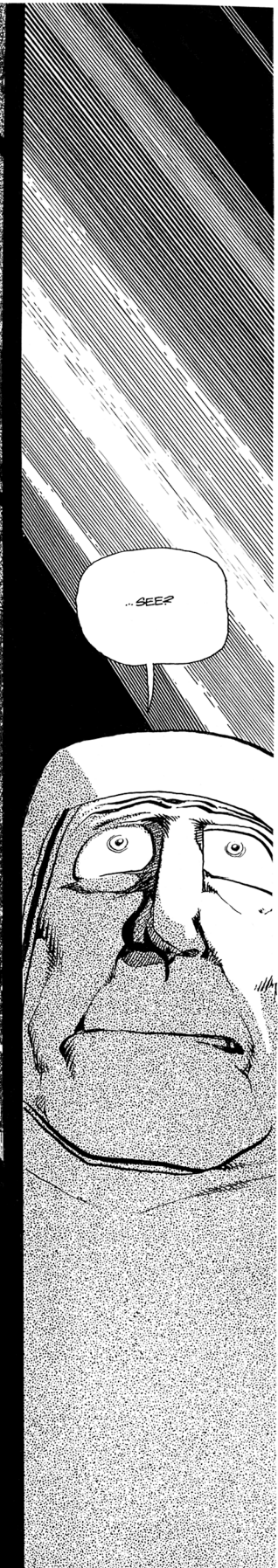
MMM.

MMM.

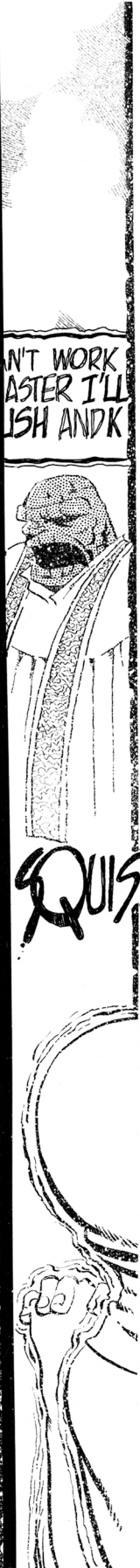
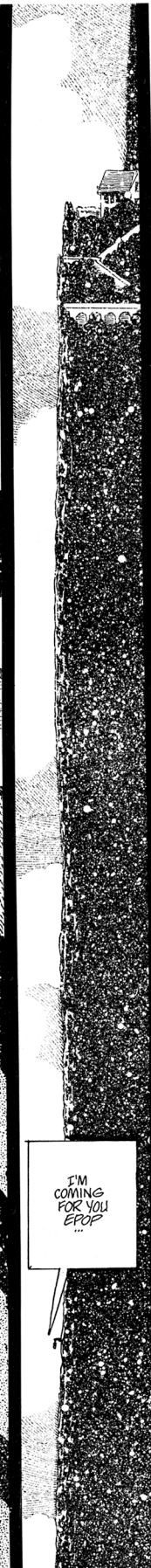


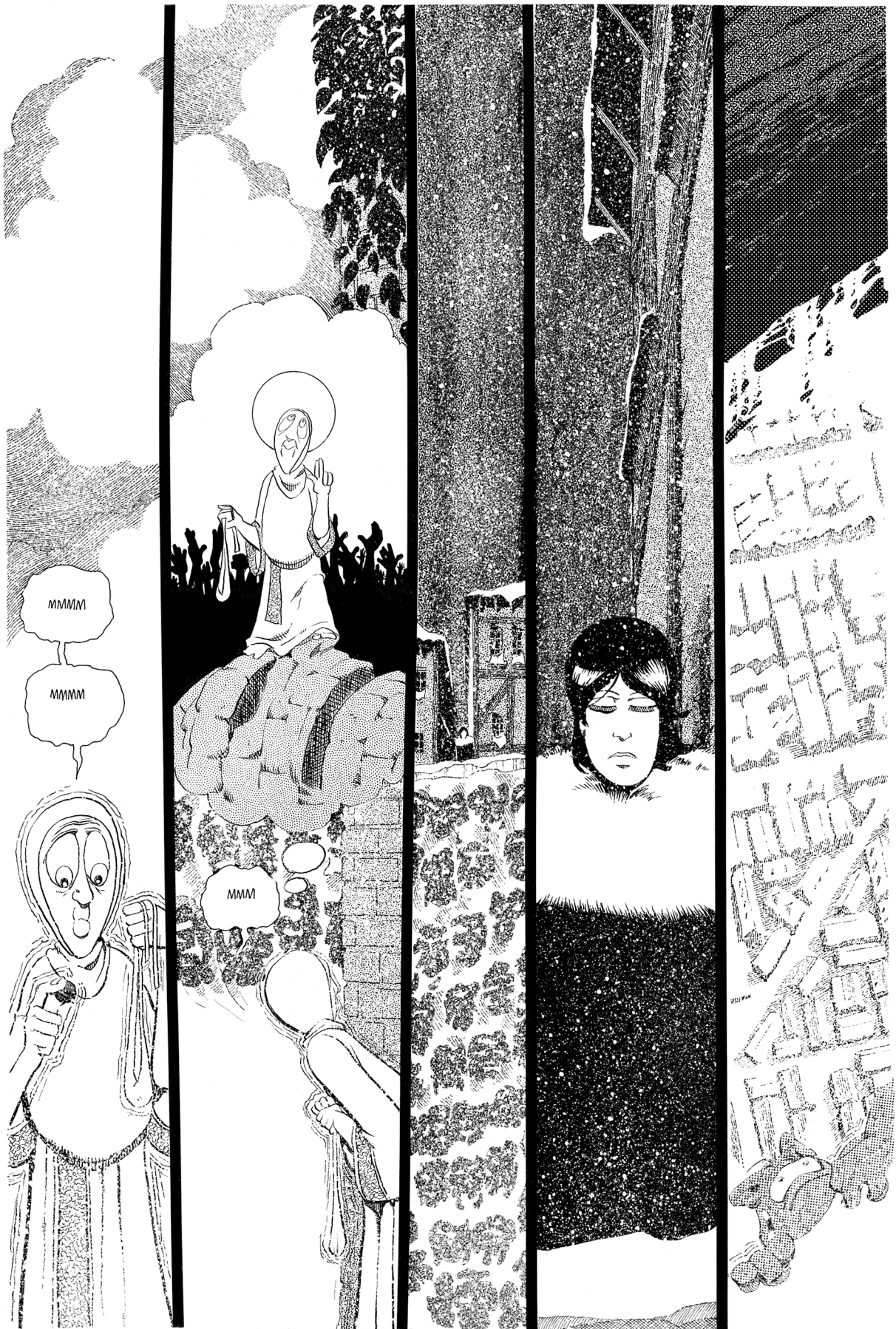
...AND IT'S
GROWING
FASTER
NOW...

DO YOU
SEE IT?
DO YOU...



...SEEP





O-KAY!

WHO'S
NEXT?

MMM

MMMM





HELP!
DON'T LET ME
DIE!
MOTHER!

LIMPH.

A
WINDY
DEATH.

NOT A
SOUND.

GOOD
SOLDIER.

THA-POK

SNOW!
SNOW!
GOB!
MOTHER!



THA ROCK

MM. BAD
LUCK.

FALLING.

DOWN.



WURK!

REAL
FAST.



HAVE TO TIME
THIS...

JUST
RIGHT...

OR

ROCK

CRACK
SNAP
RIP
POP
SNAP
WRENCH
CRIK



TORN
LIGAMENTS.

SEVERED
TENDONS.

SLIPPED
DISCS.

DISLOCATED
SPINE.

WHIPLASH.

FRACTURED
RIBS.

INTERNAL
BLEEDING.

SHOULDER
SEPARATIONS
(TWO)

MUSTN'T.

BLACK.

OUT.

IGNORE
PAIN.

THINK

ASTORIA.

IF YOU'VE
HARMED
HER, EPOR.





DIZZY.

MUST BE
THE RIBS.

HAVE TO
STRAIGHTEN
MY...

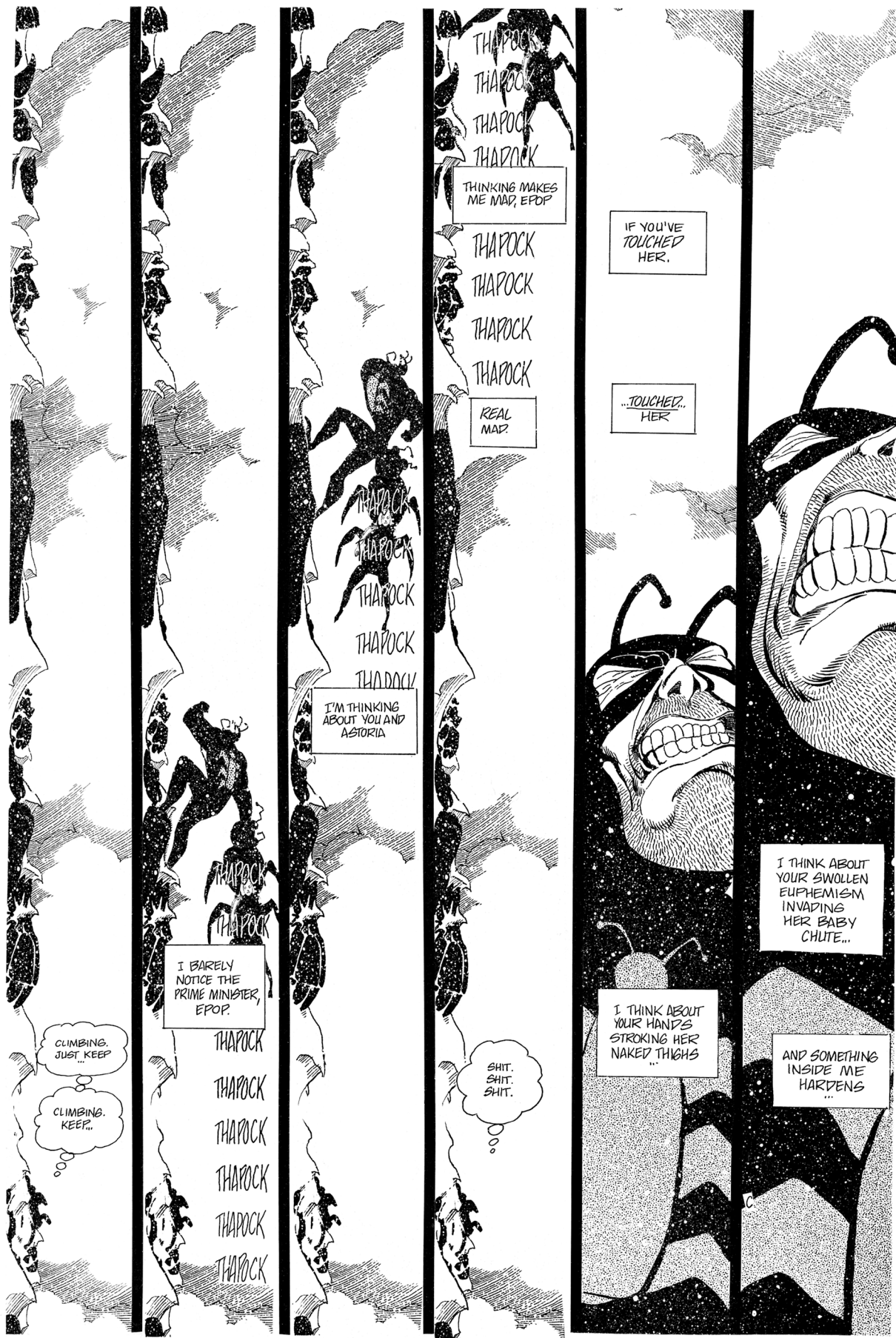
CRICK

SPINE.

BREATHE
DEEP

OKAY.

HEADS UP,
EFOR.



THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK

THINKING MAKES
ME MAD, EPOD

THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK

REAL
MAD?

THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK

I'M THINKING
ABOUT YOU AND
ASTORIA

THAPOCK
THAPOCK

I BARELY
NOTICE THE
PRIME MINISTER,
EPOD.

THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK
THAPOCK

CLIMBING.
JUST KEEP...

CLIMBING.
KEEP...

SHIT.
SHIT.
SHIT.

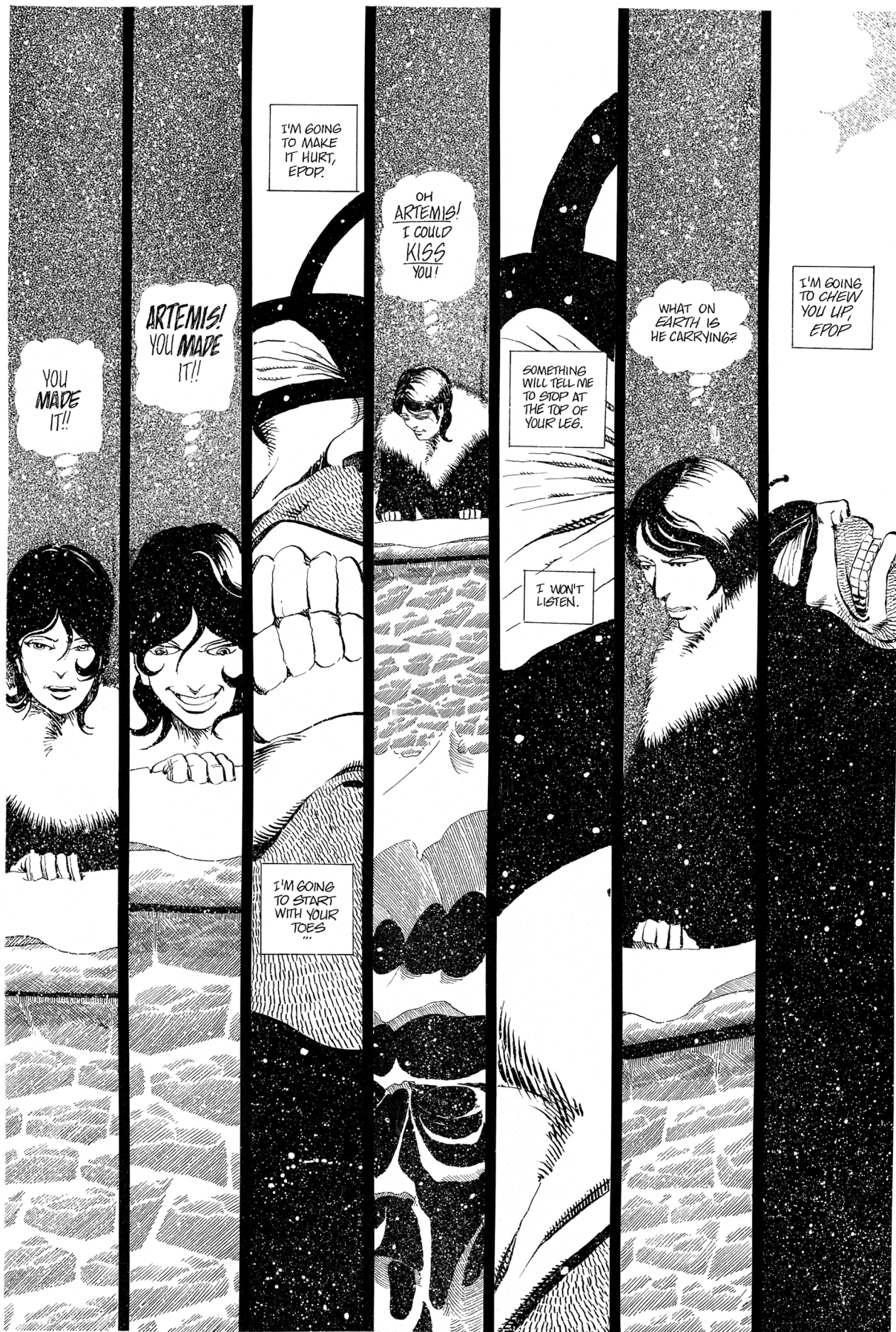
IF YOU'VE
TOUCHED
HER.

...TOUCHED...
HER

I THINK ABOUT
YOUR SWOLLEN
EUPHEMISM
INVADING
HER BABY
CHUTE...

I THINK ABOUT
YOUR HANDS
STROKING HER
NAKED THIGHS
...

AND SOMETHING
INSIDE ME
HARDENS
...



I'M GOING
TO MAKE
IT HURT,
EPOP.

YOU
MADE
IT!!

ARTEMIS!
YOU MADE
IT!!

OH
ARTEMIS!
I COULD
KISS
YOU!

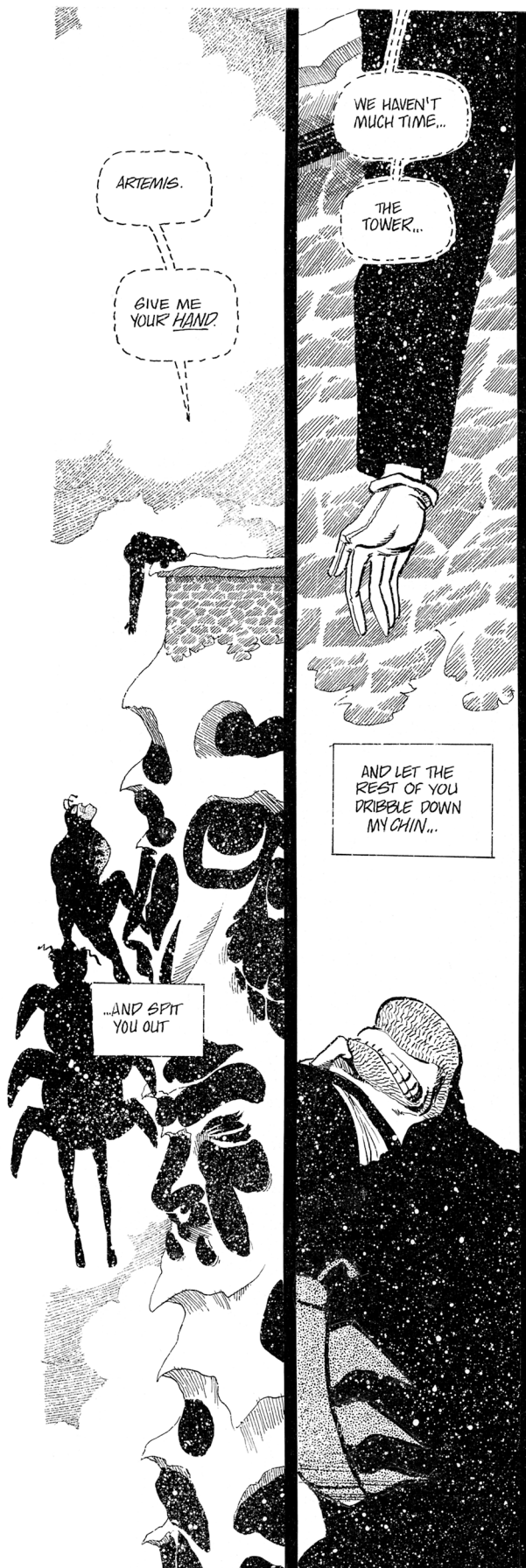
SOMETHING
WILL TELL ME
TO STOP AT
THE TOP OF
YOUR LEG.

I WON'T
LISTEN.

I'M GOING
TO START
WITH YOUR
TOES
...

WHAT ON
EARTH IS
HE CARRYING?

I'M GOING
TO CHEW
YOU UP,
EPOP



NEXT: SETTLING SCORES

OUT
WITH THE
IN
CROWD

ARTEMIS!

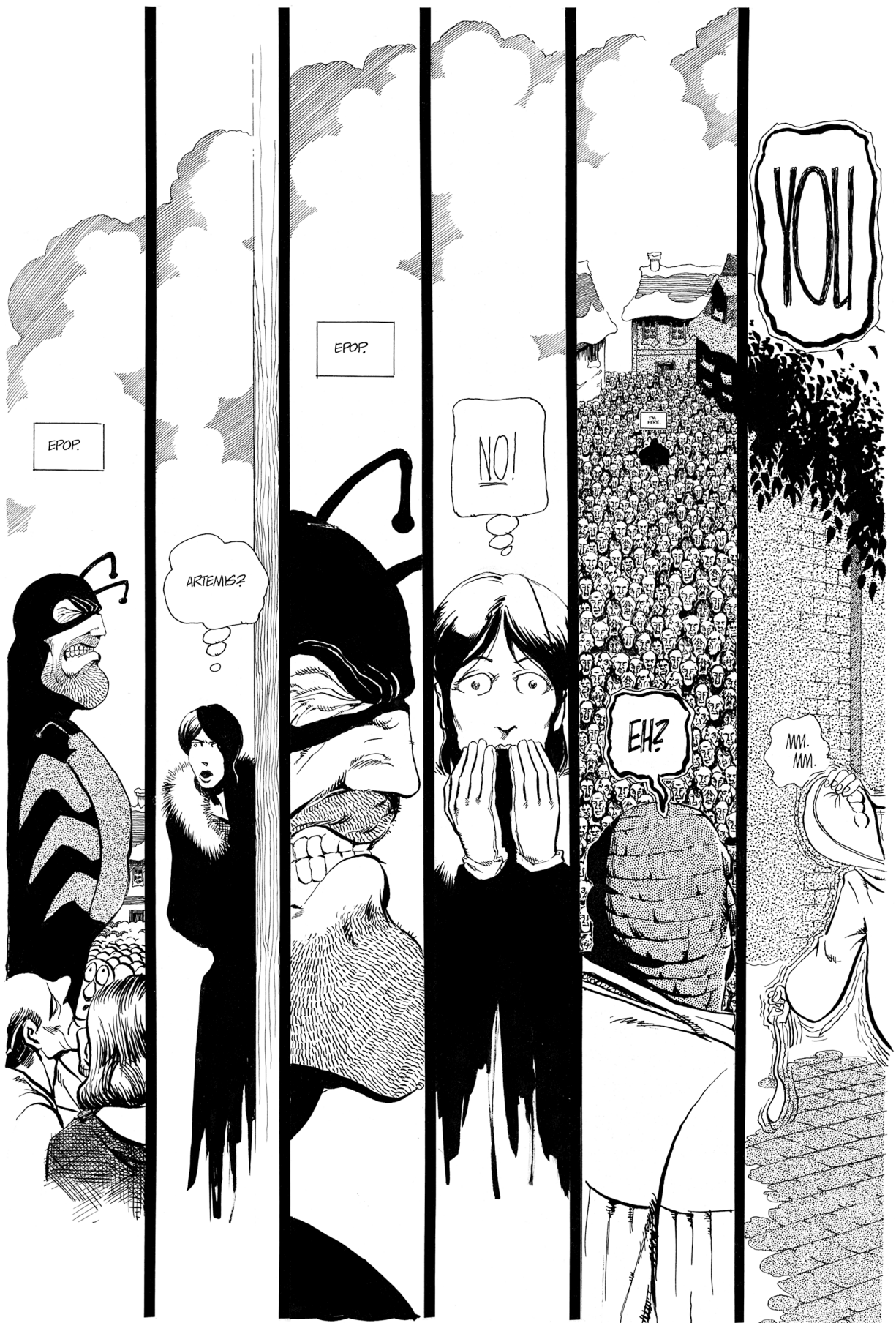


ARTEMIS!

STOP!

WHAT
ARE YOU...





WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

LET HIM THROUGH

WHAT'S HE SAYING?
I CAN'T HEAR HIM UP HERE

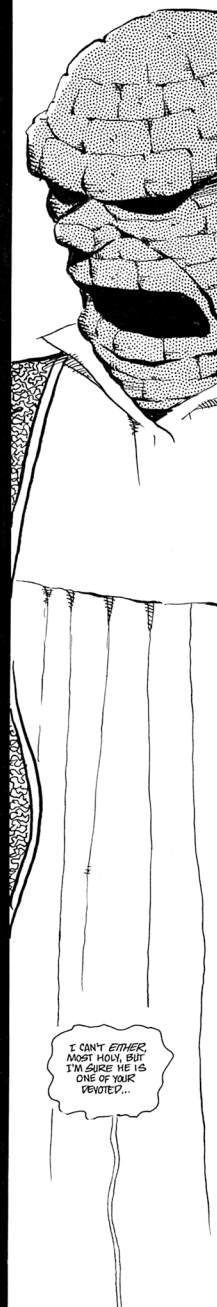
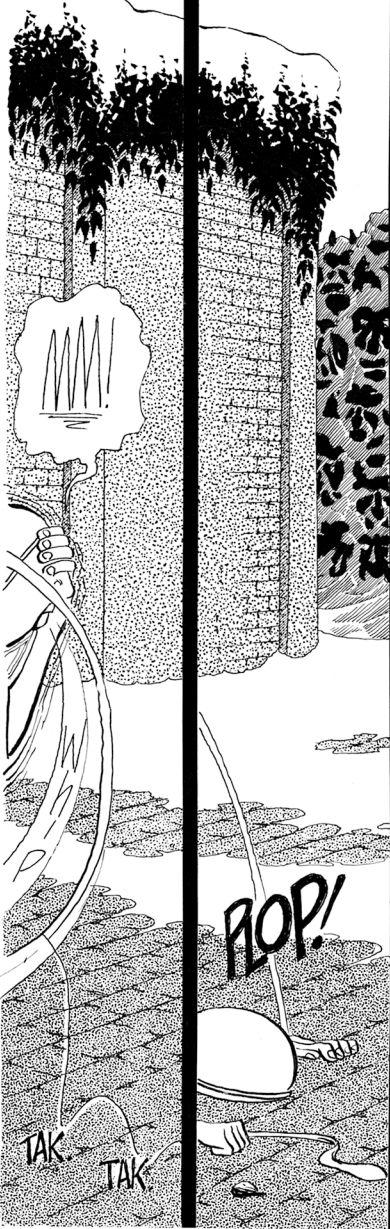
BAH!

LET HIM THROUGH

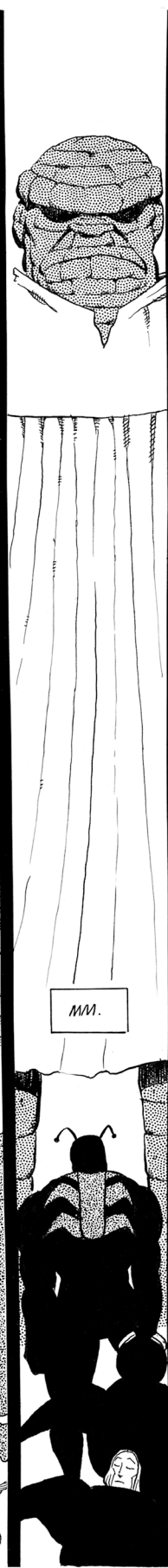
YOU WANT A CHALLENGE, EPOP?

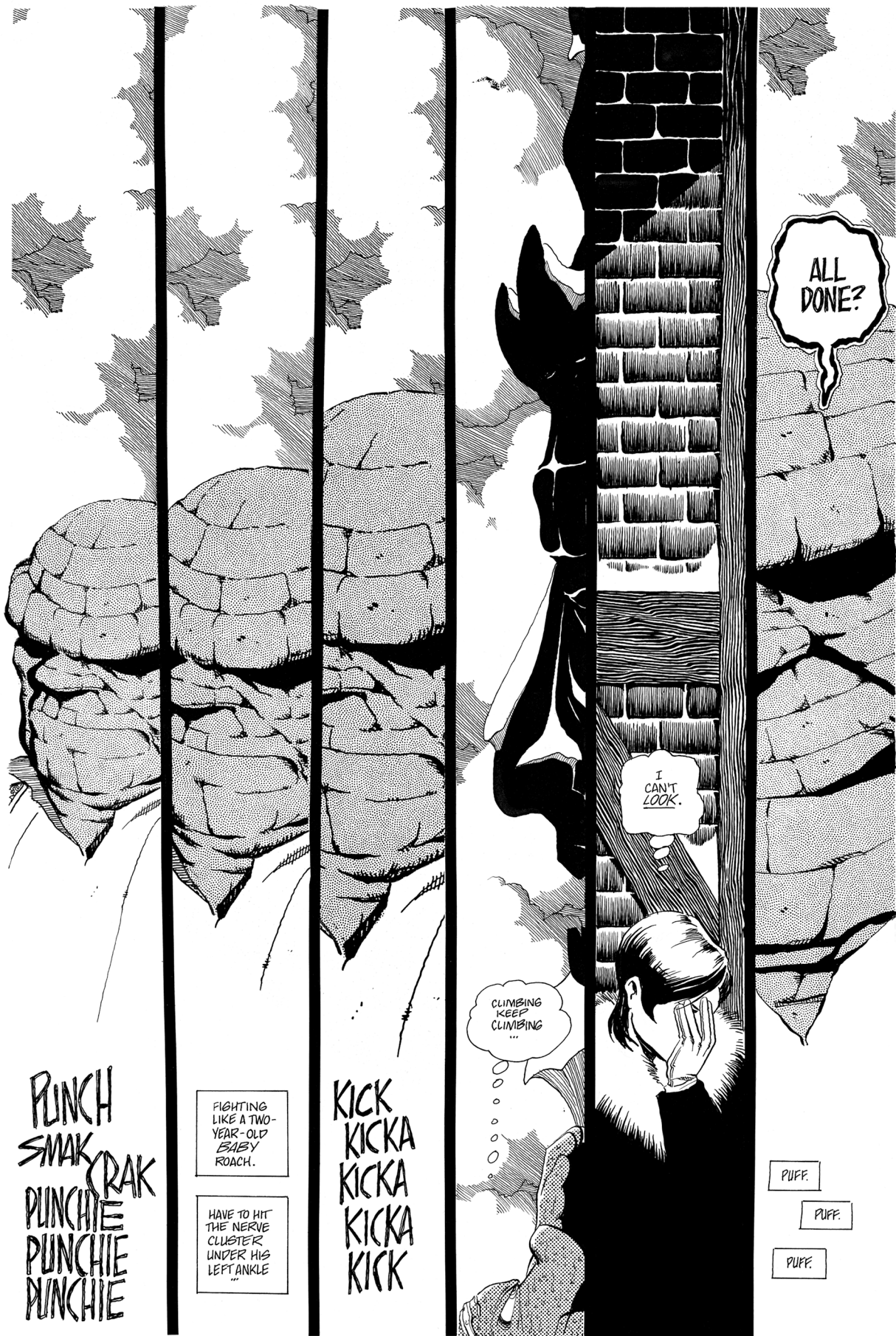
IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?

I CAN'T EITHER, MOST MEN, BUT I'M SURE HE IS ONE OF YOUR DEVOTEES...



AK!
OUTTA THE WAY LOOK
BACK! BACK UP!
OUCH
EEK!
GET BACK!
GIVE HIM
RUN! TO THE POPE
OOPS
GRAB THE KIDS
HEN!





PUNCH
SMACK
CRACK
PUNCHIE
PUNCHIE
PUNCHIE

FIGHTING
LIKE A TWO-
YEAR-OLD
BABY
ROACH.

HAVE TO HIT
THE NERVE
CLUSTER
UNDER HIS
LEFT ANKLE
...

KICK
KICKA
KICKA
KICKA
KICKA
KICK

CLIMBING
KEEP
CLIMBING
...

I
CAN'T
LOOK.

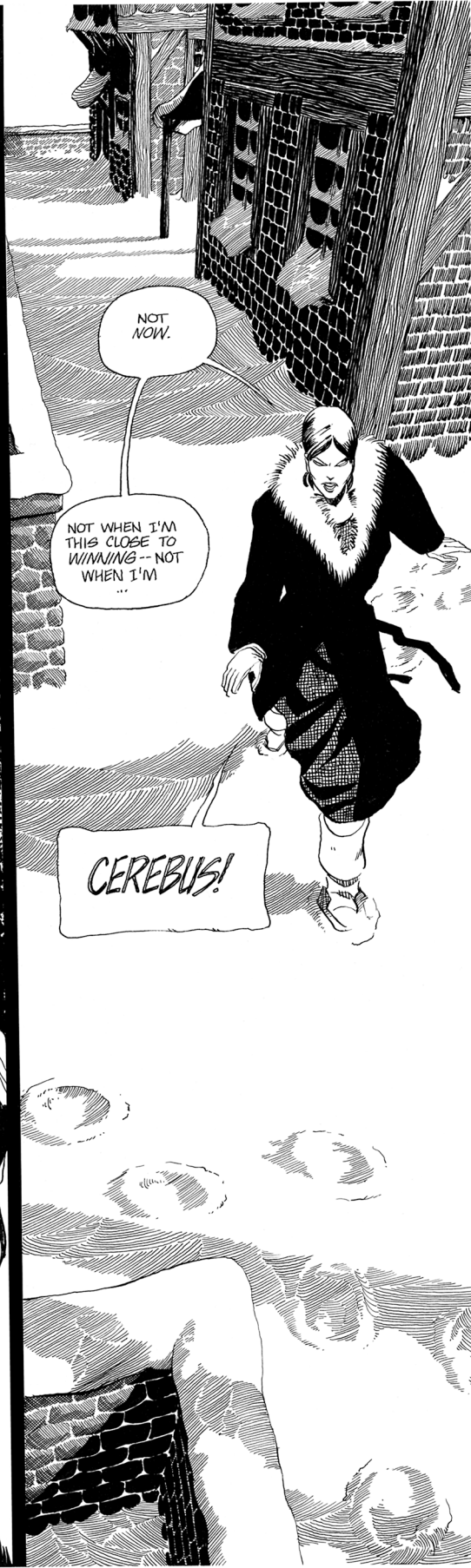
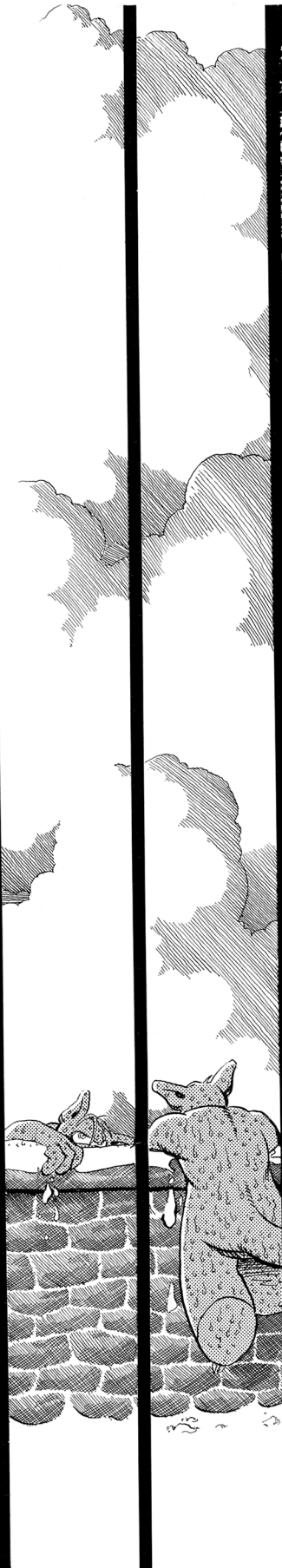
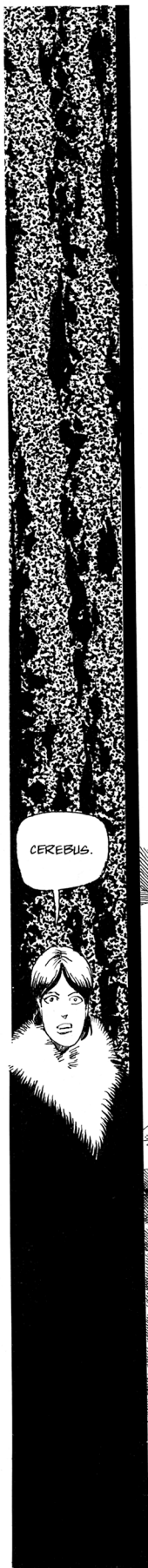
ALL
DONE?

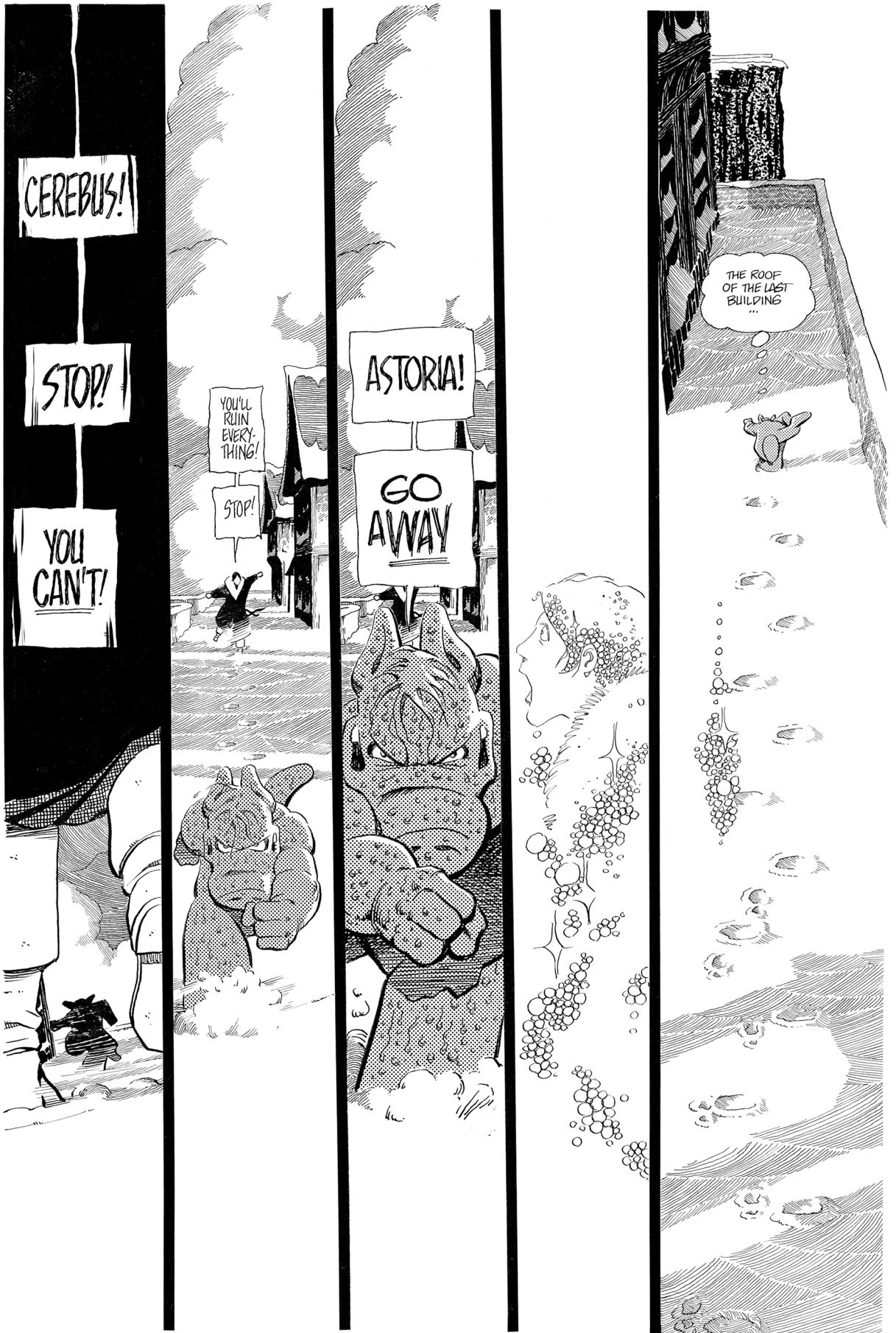
PUFF.


PUFF.

PUFF.









ARE THERE ANY
OTHERS FOOLISH
ENOUGH TO TRY
AND CHALLENGE
THE LIVING *TARIM*?

MY POWER IS
ABSOLITE!
NONE MAY STAND
AGAINST ME!

TARIM IS COME
ONCE MORE--TO
LAY WASTE THE
FALSE TEMPLES

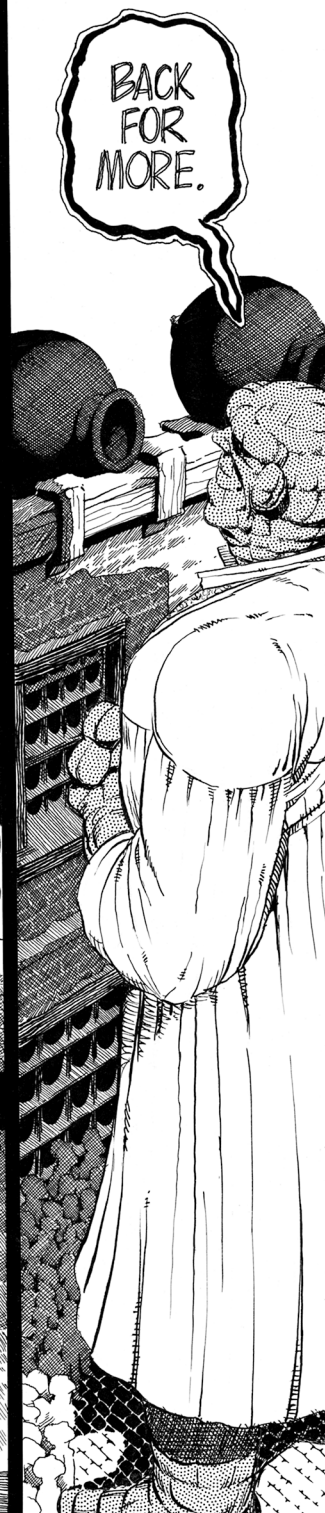
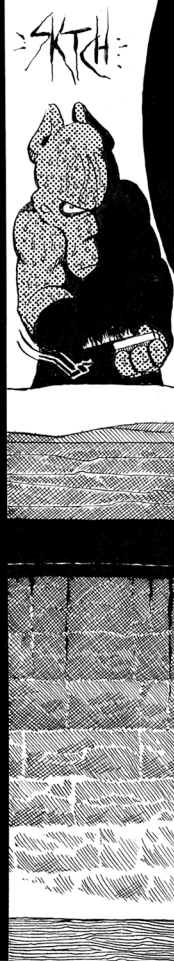
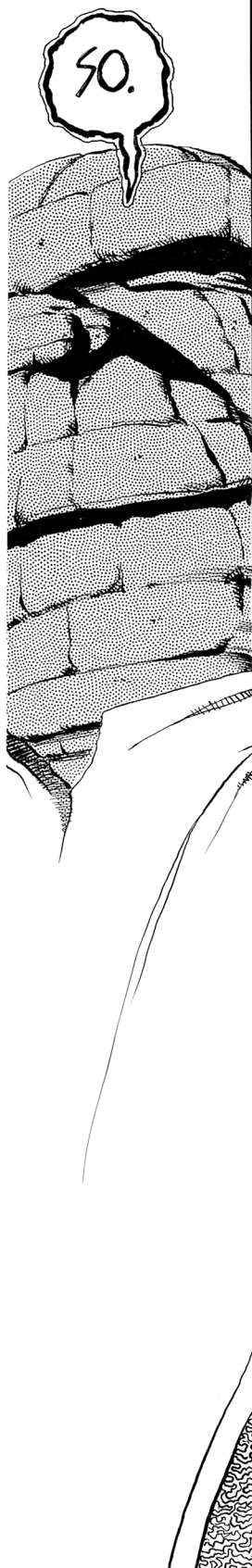
TO STRIKE
DOWN THE
BLASPHEMERS!
TO DESTROY...

UH?

BRUSH
BRUSH

GOOD LUCK

W.

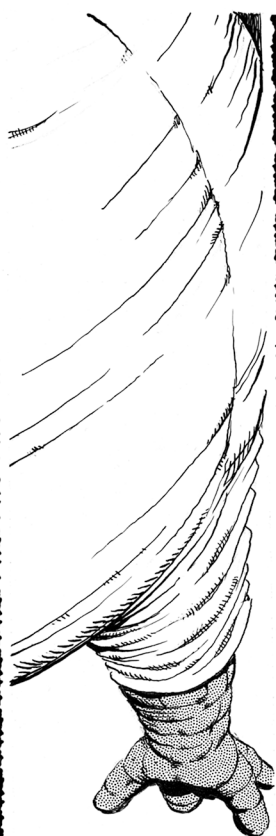


READY?

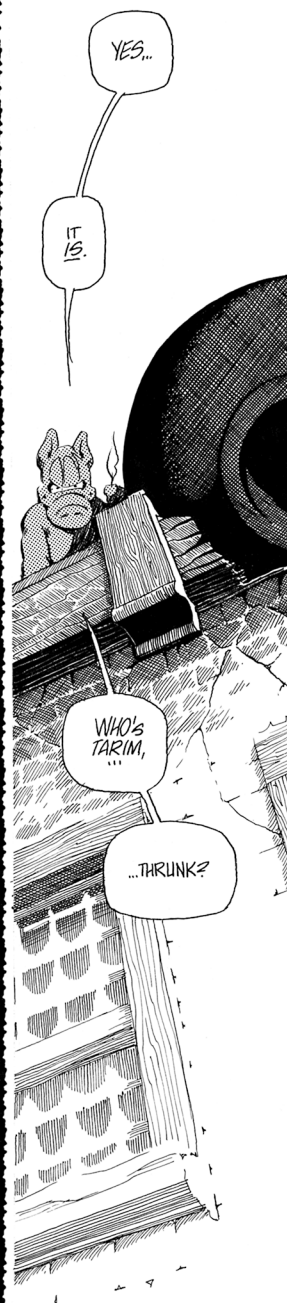
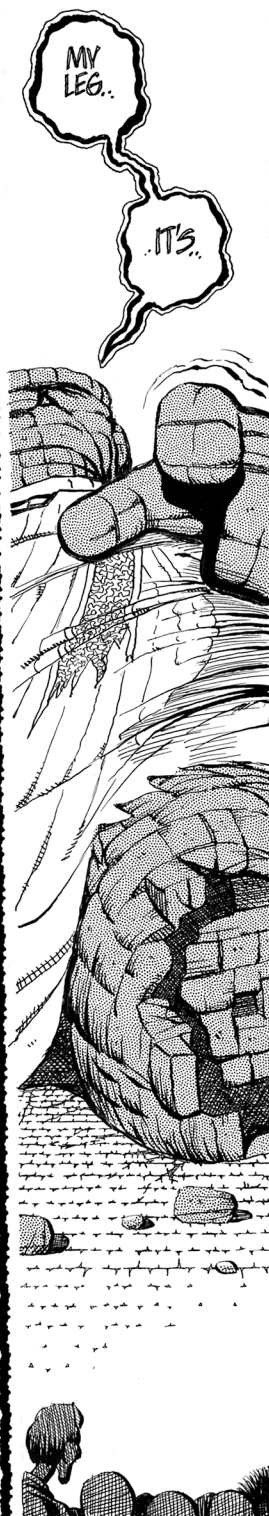


THIS IS
GOING TO
HURT QUITE
A...





THE POPE IS FALLING!
LOOK OUT
RUN! RUN!
HELP!
INCOMING WOUNDED



WHO'S
TARIM,
NECROSS!!?

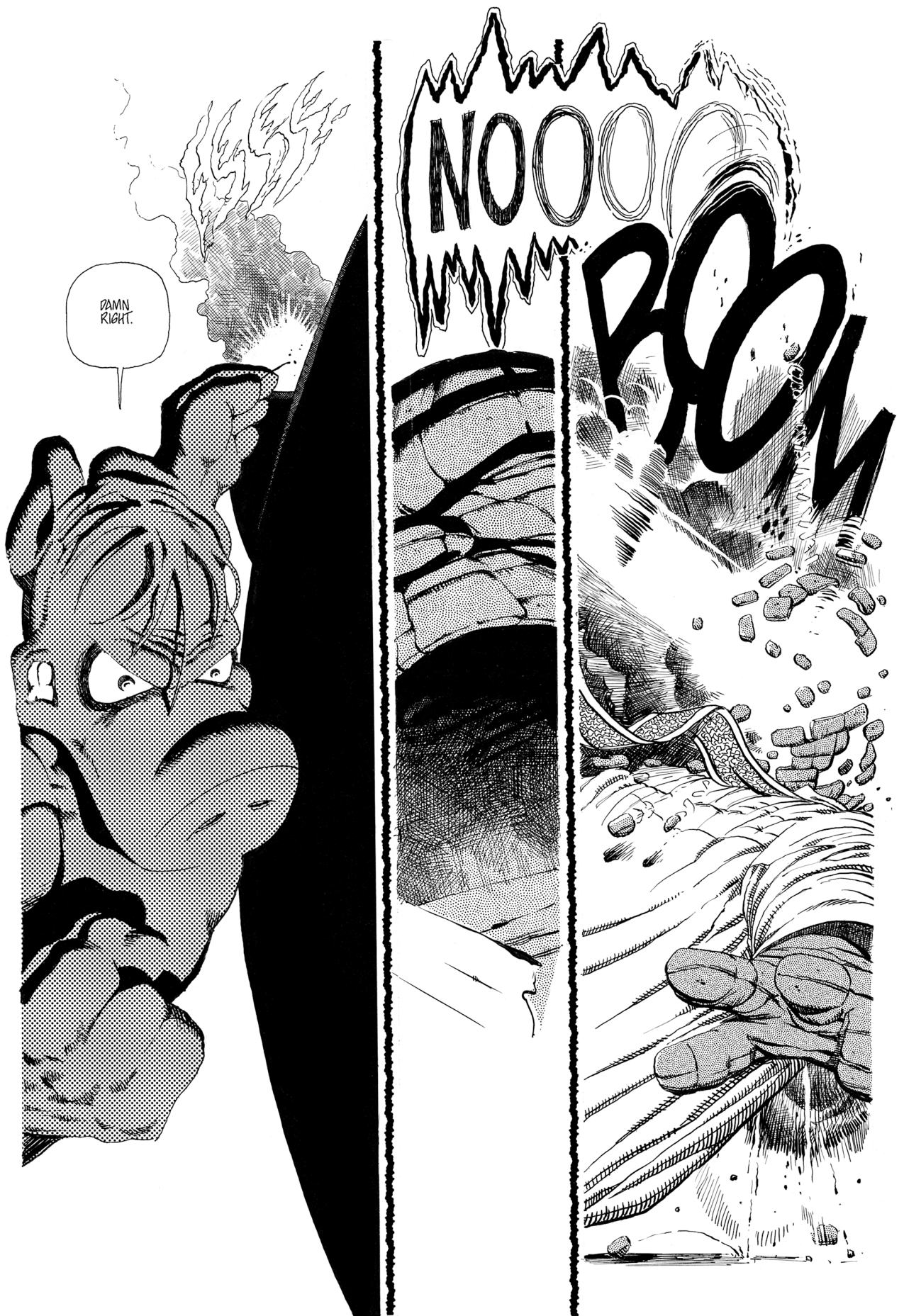
NO!
PLEASE!

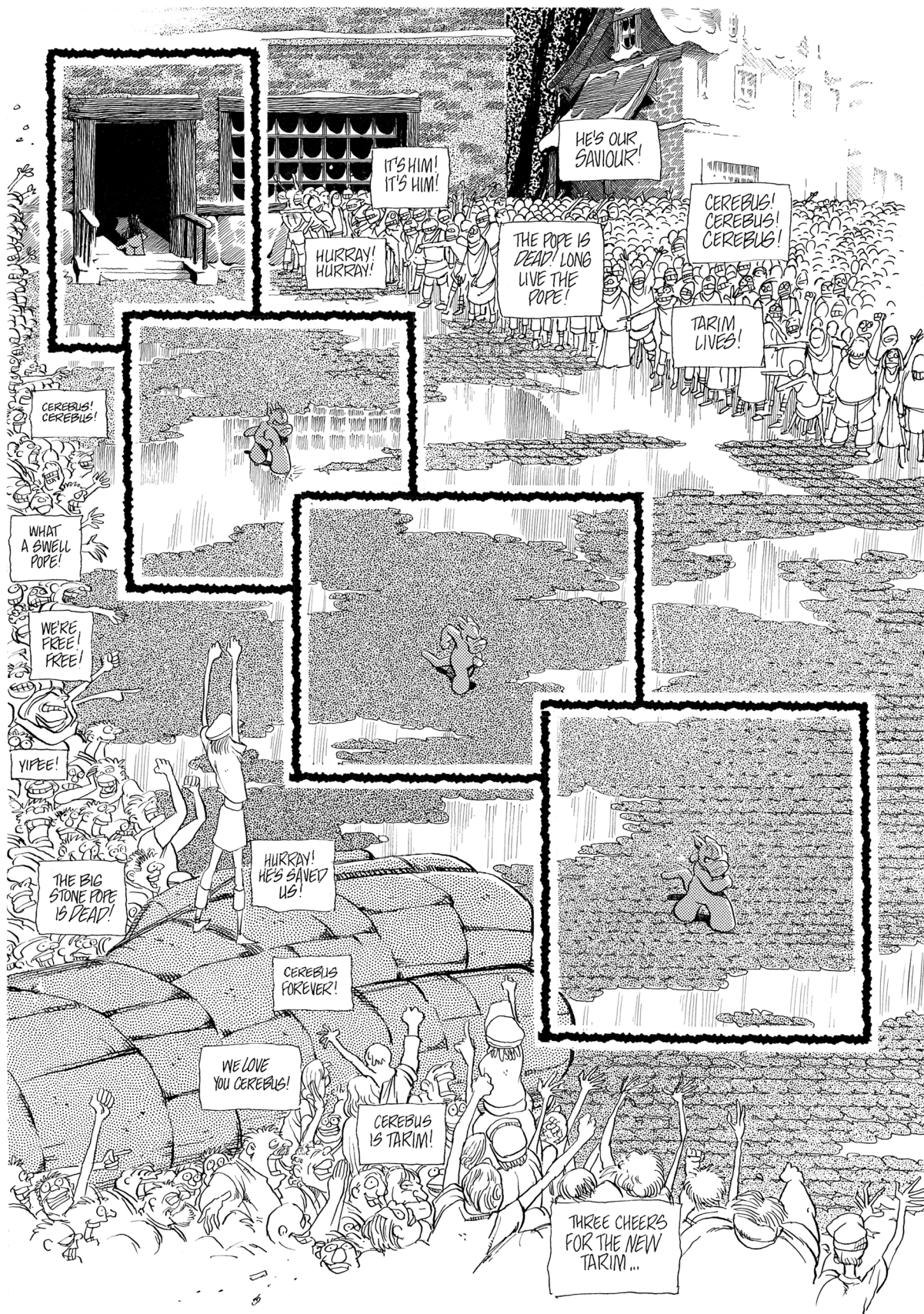
I'LL GIVE
YOU ALL THE
GOLD! EVERY
COIN!

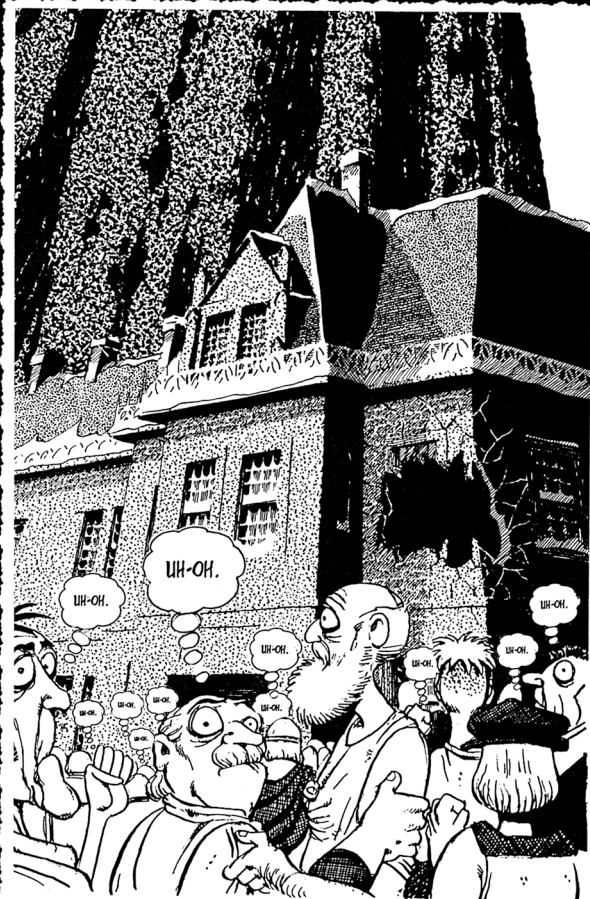
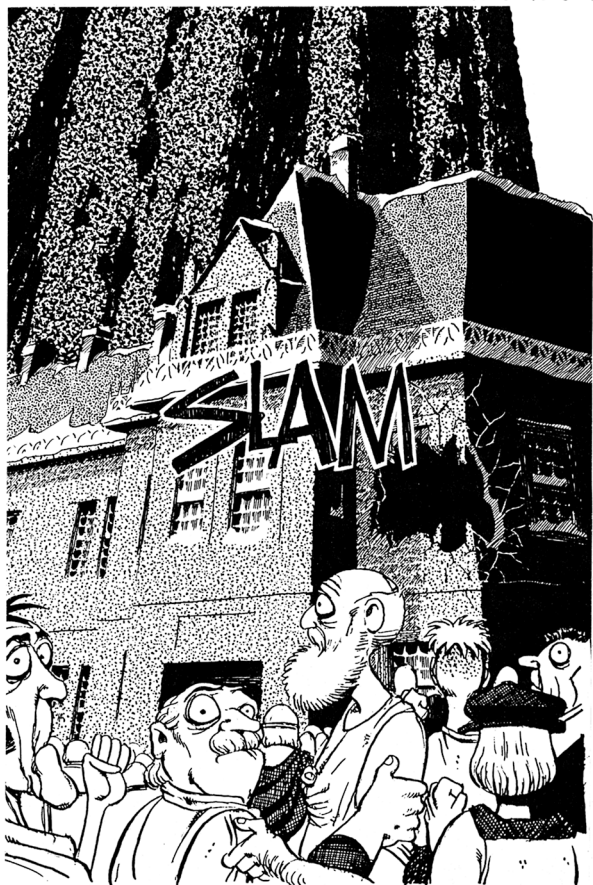
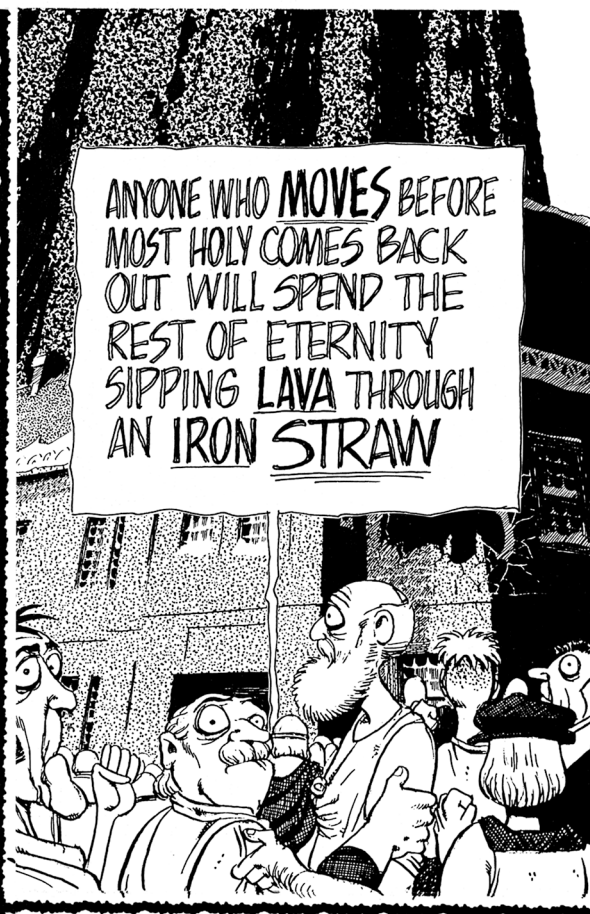
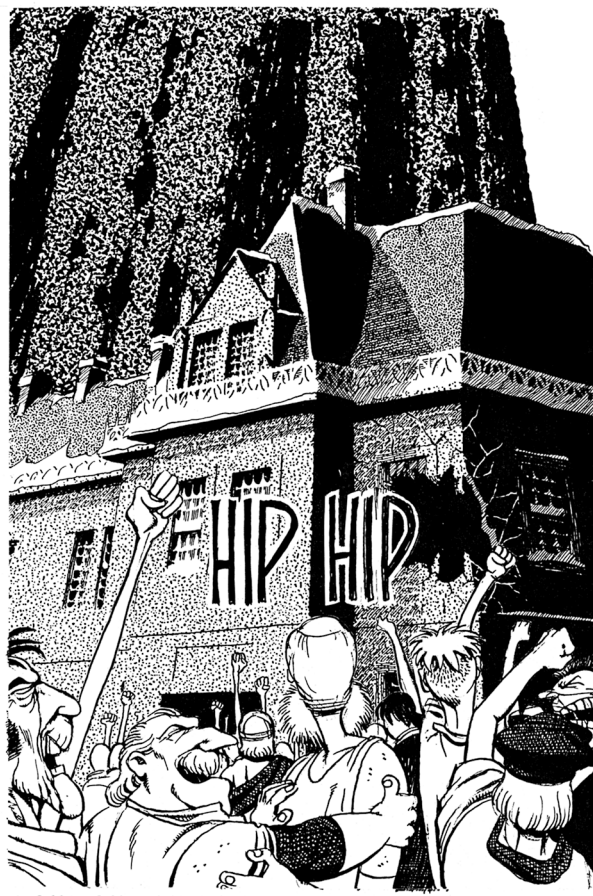
WHO?!

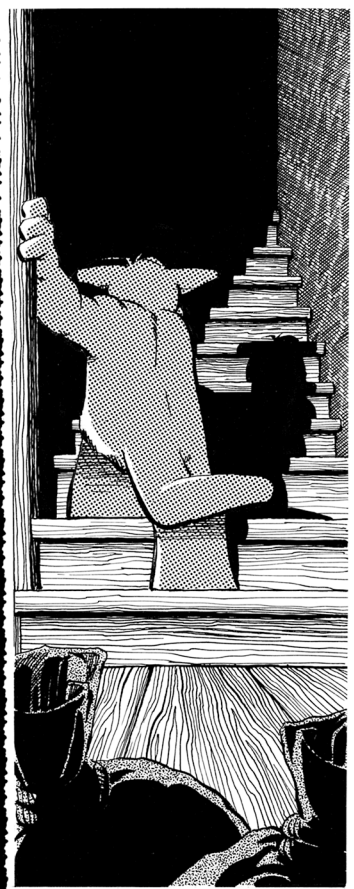
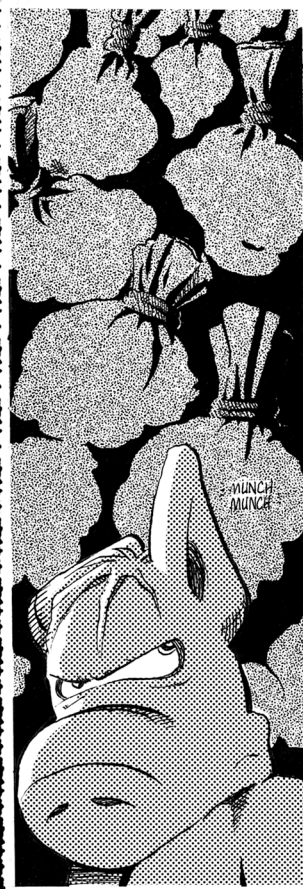
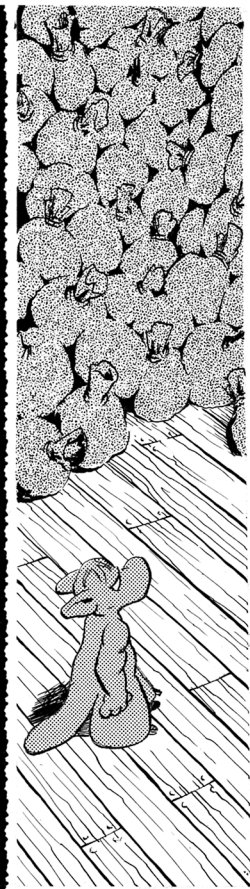
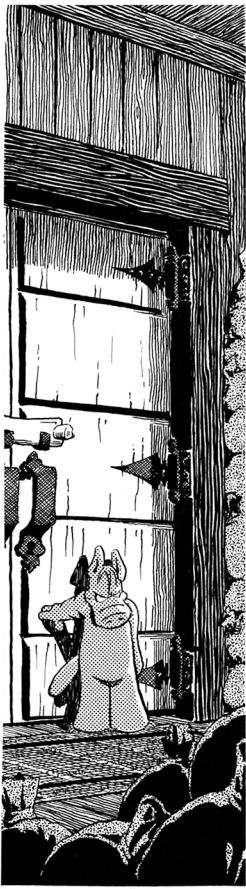
YOU
ARE!

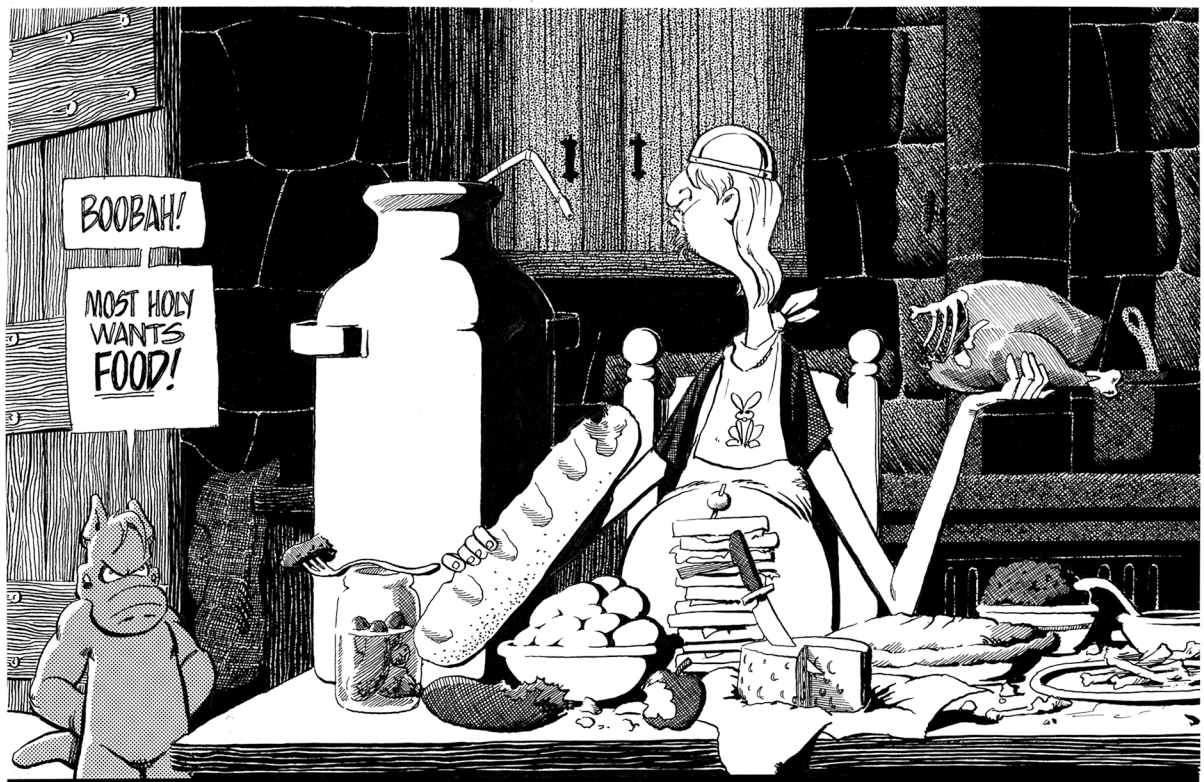
YOU!









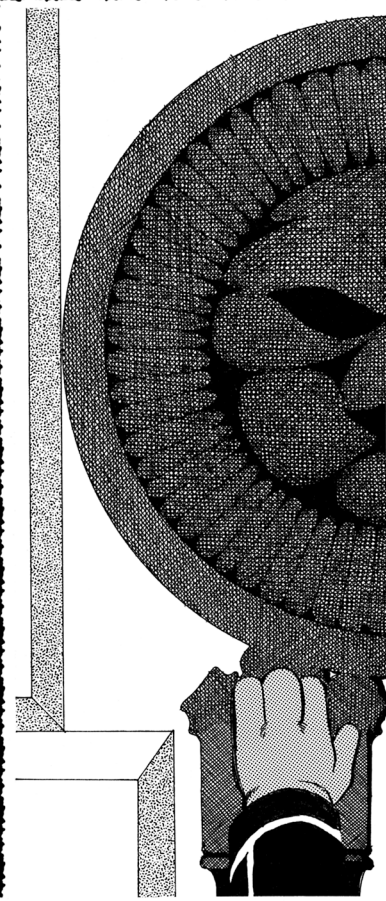
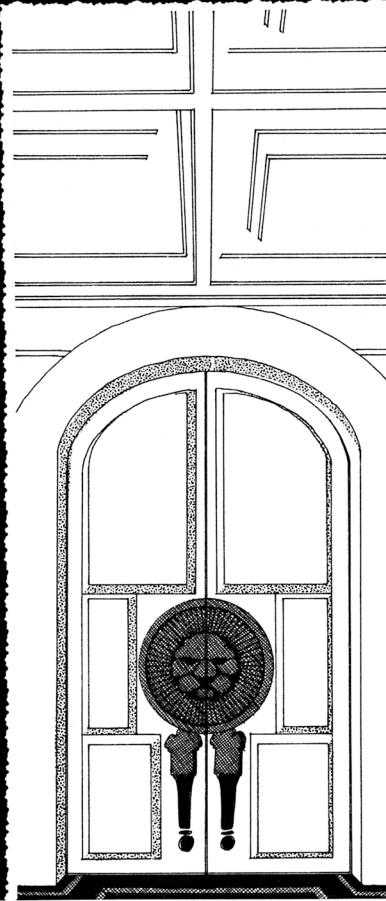
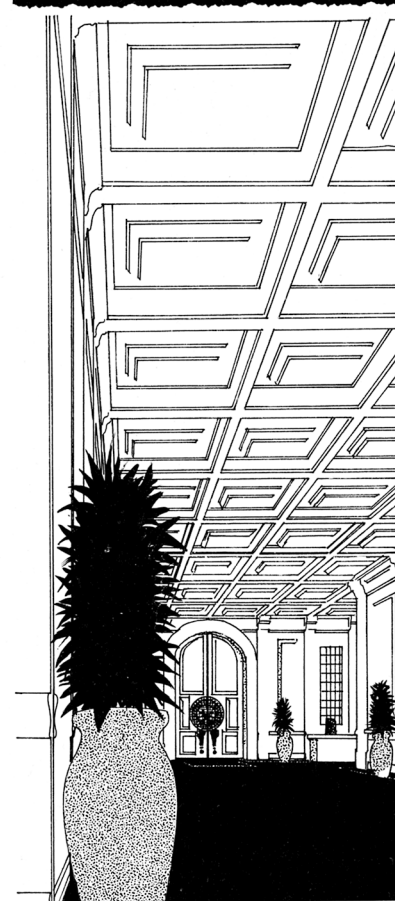
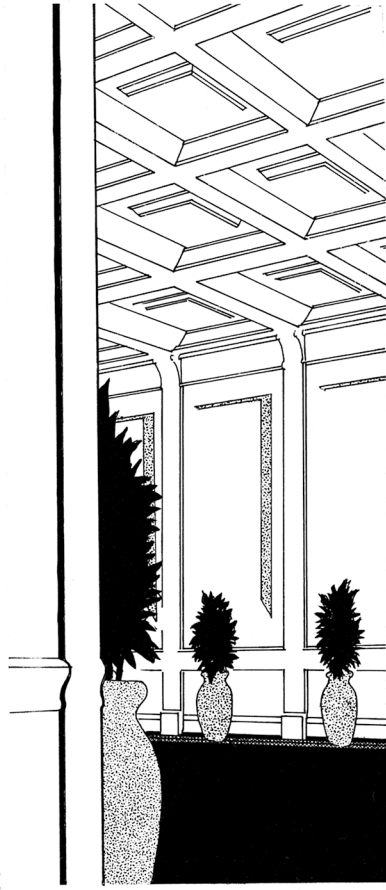
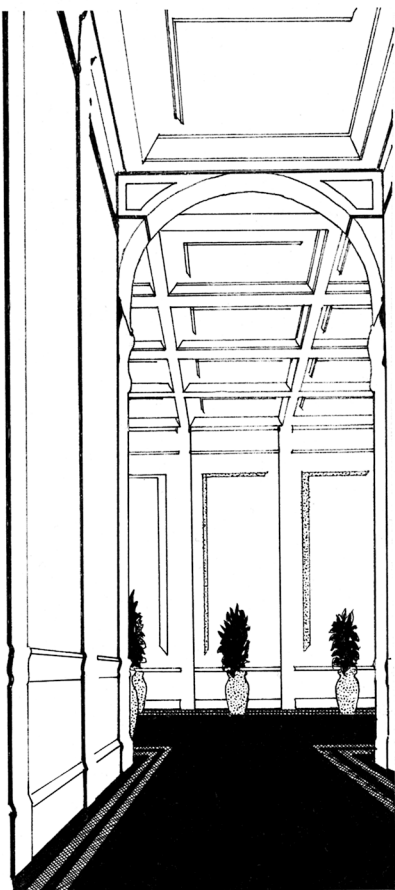


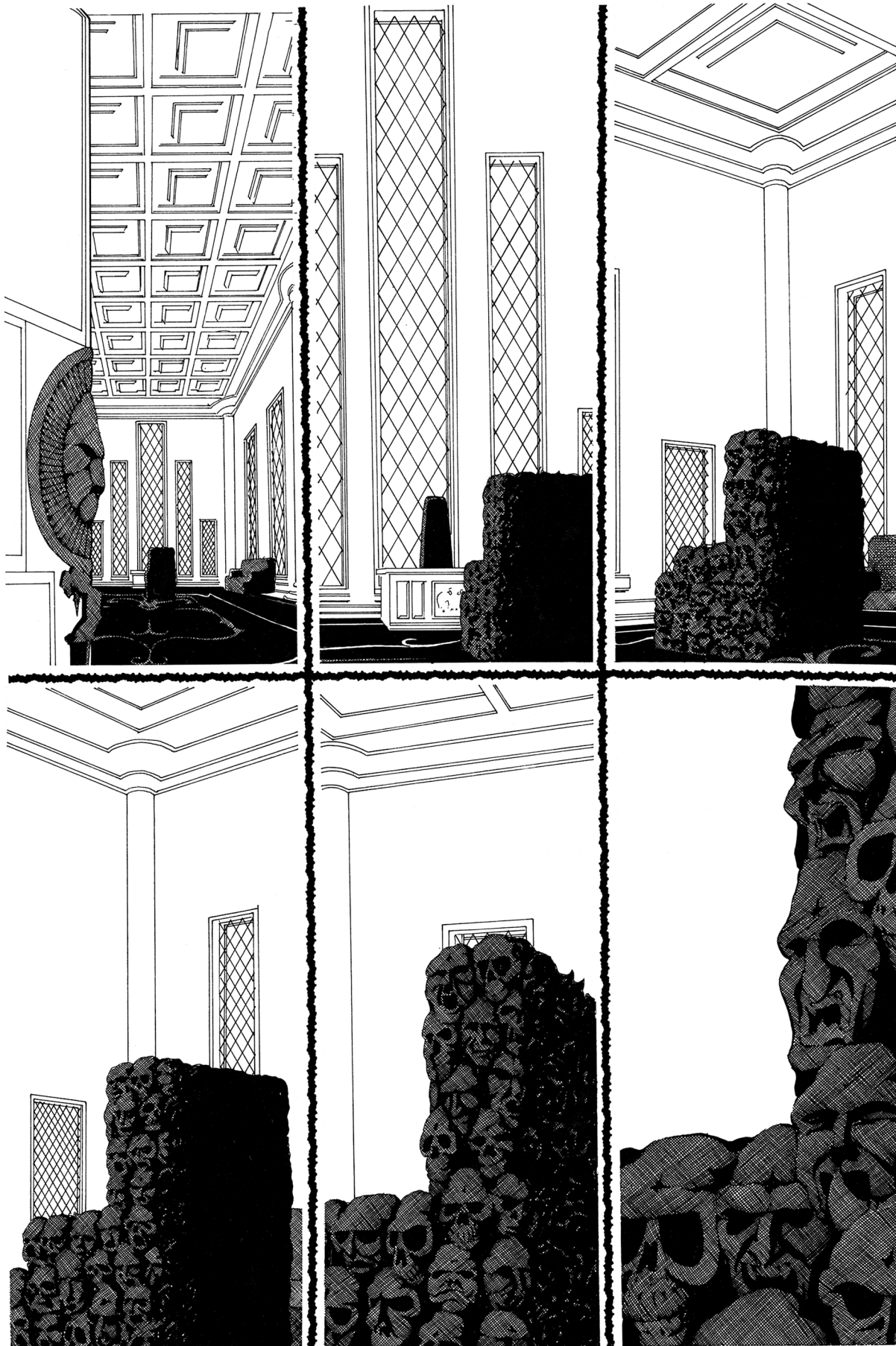
NEXT: *dead friends*

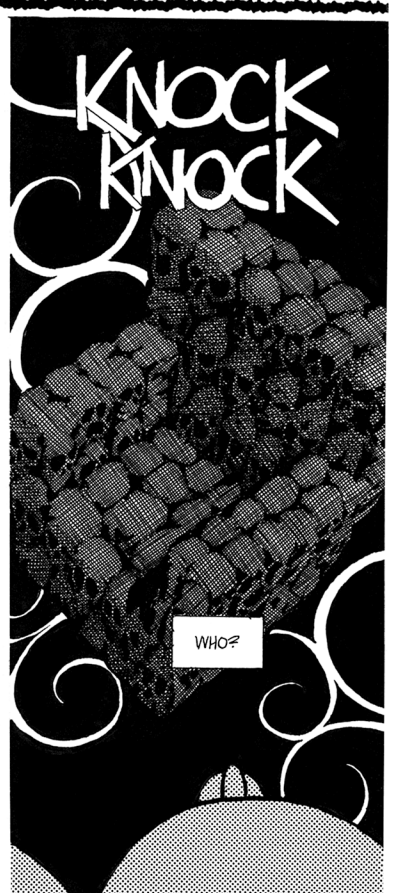
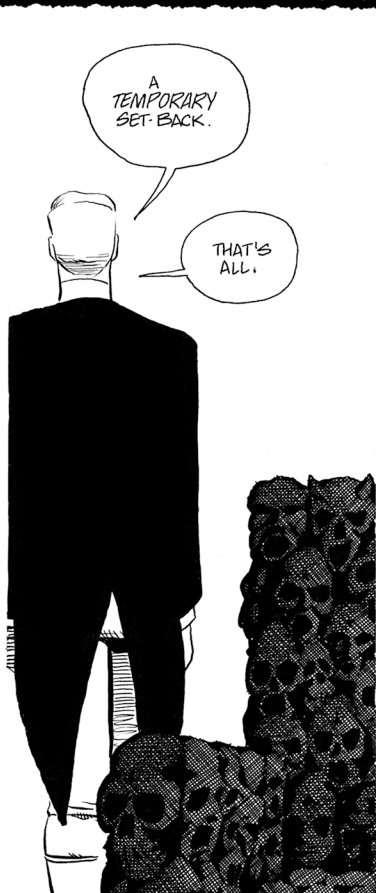
Dead Friends

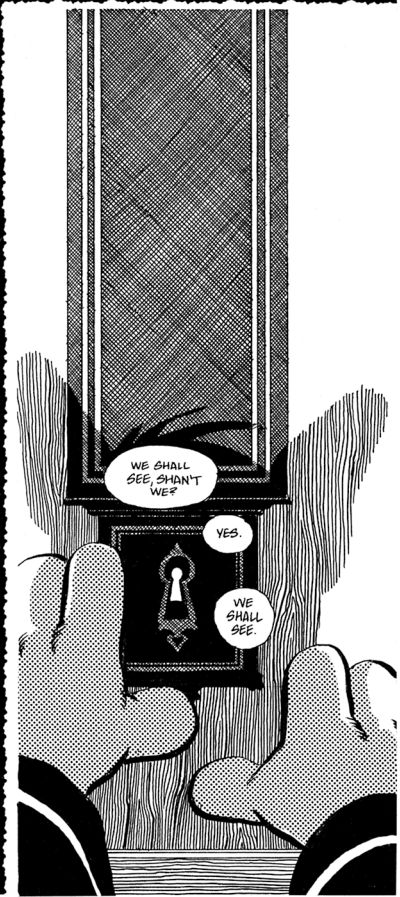
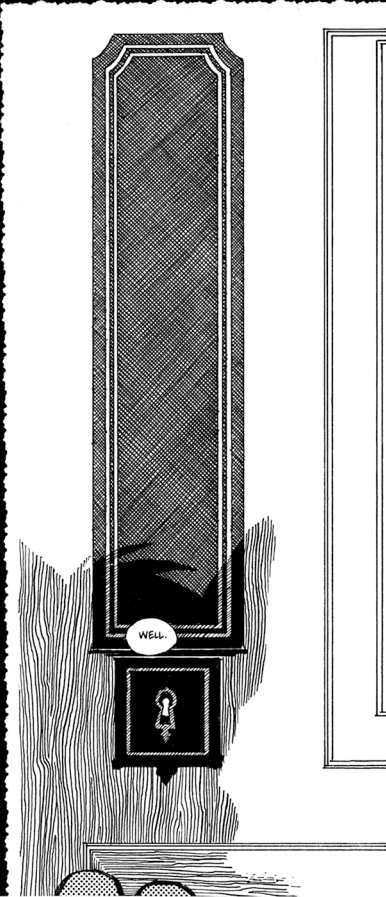
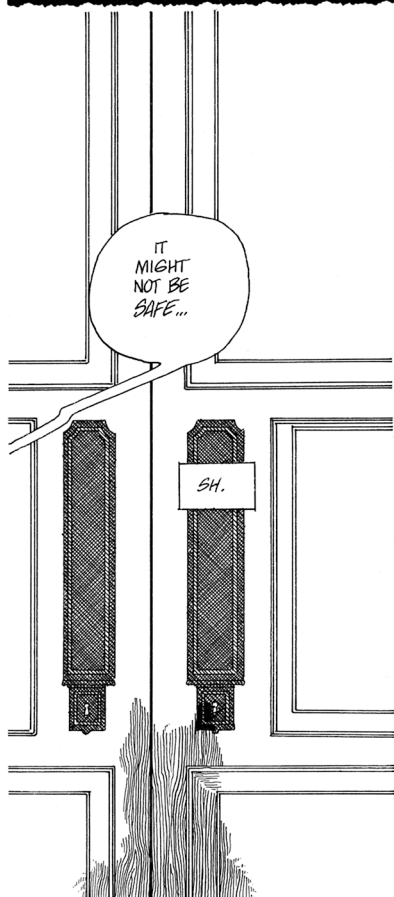
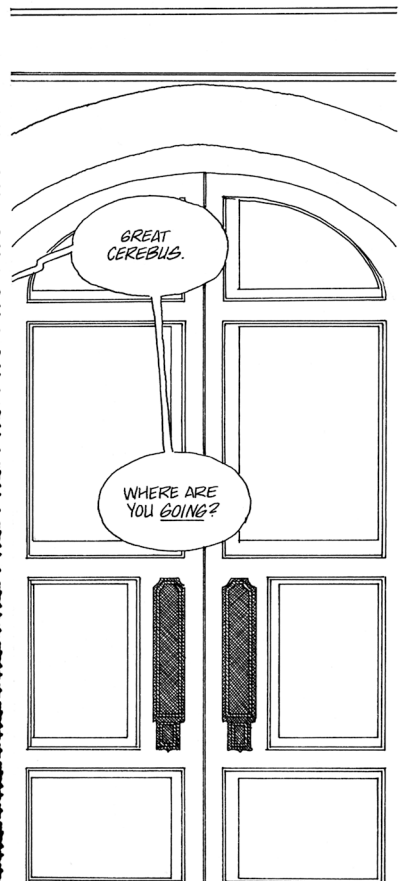
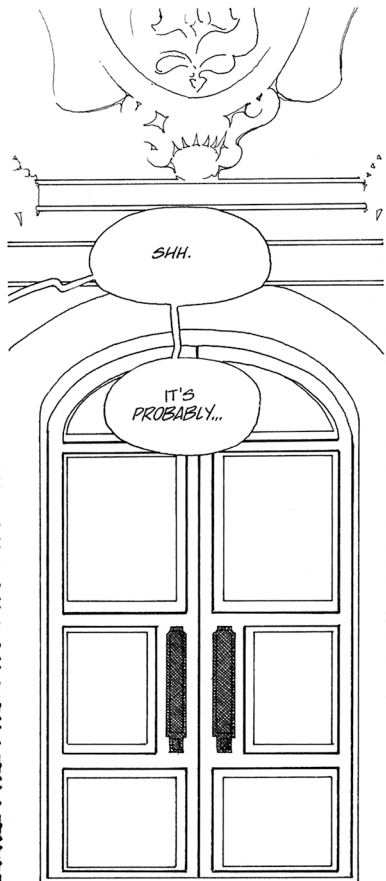
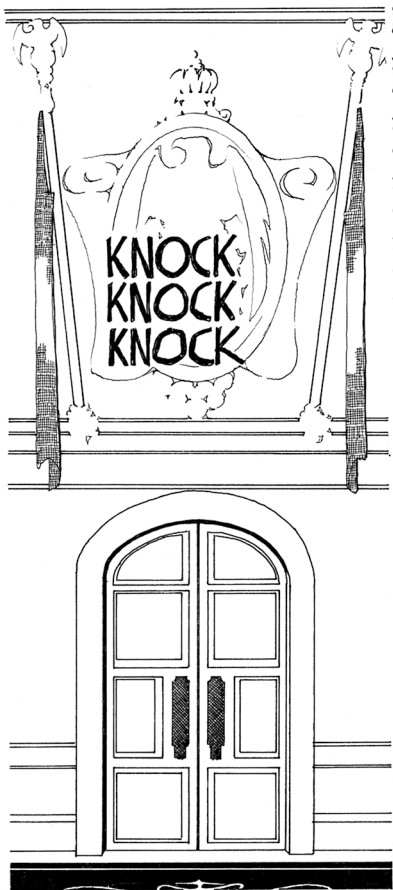
BELCH!

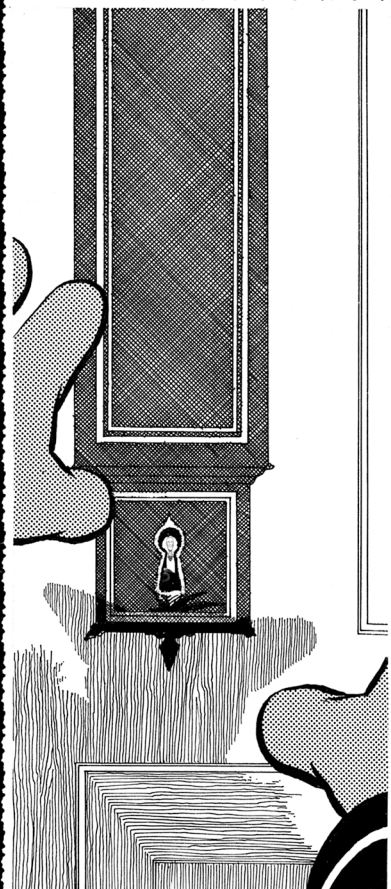
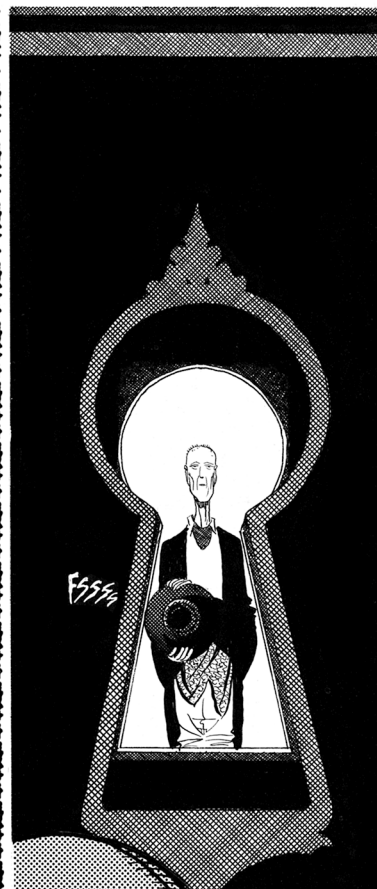
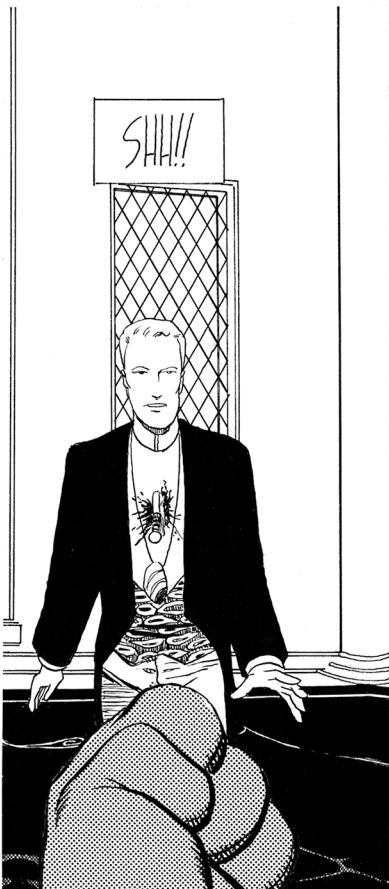
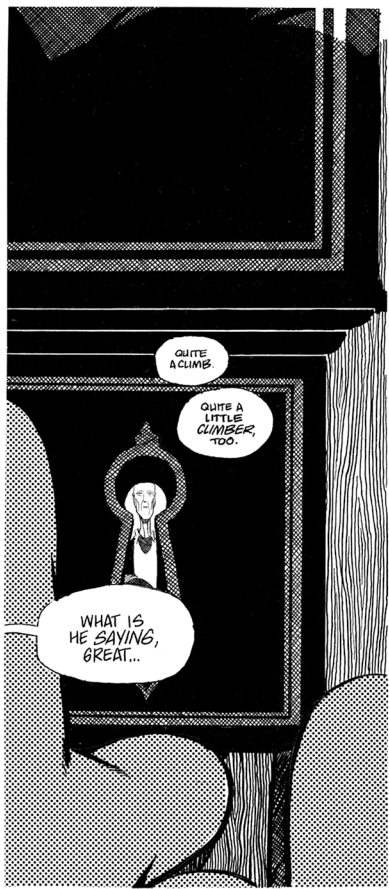


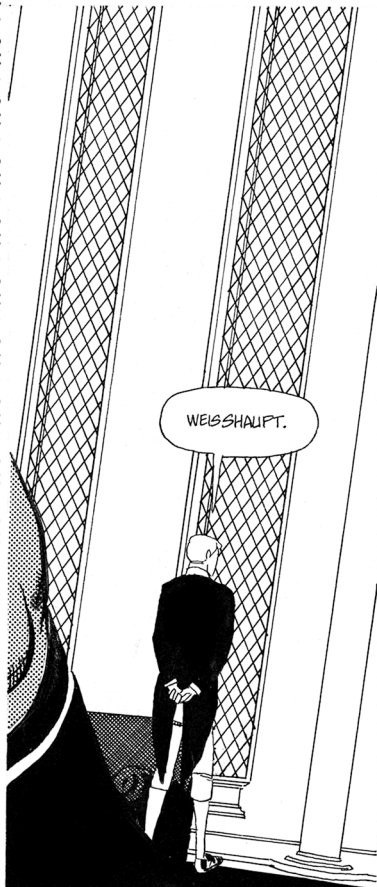


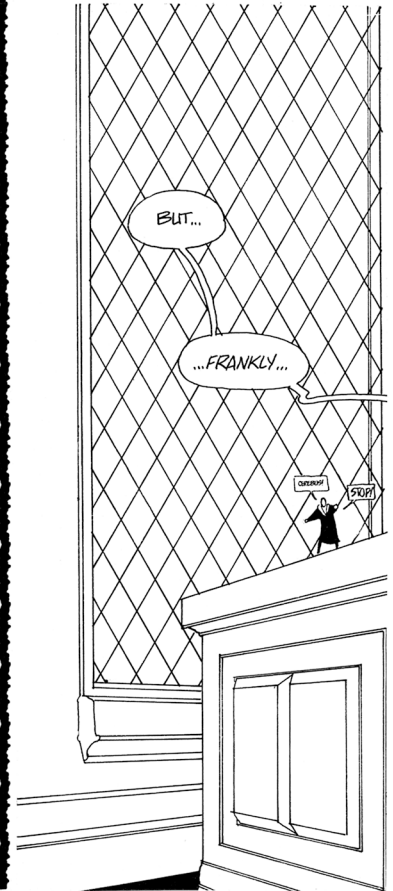
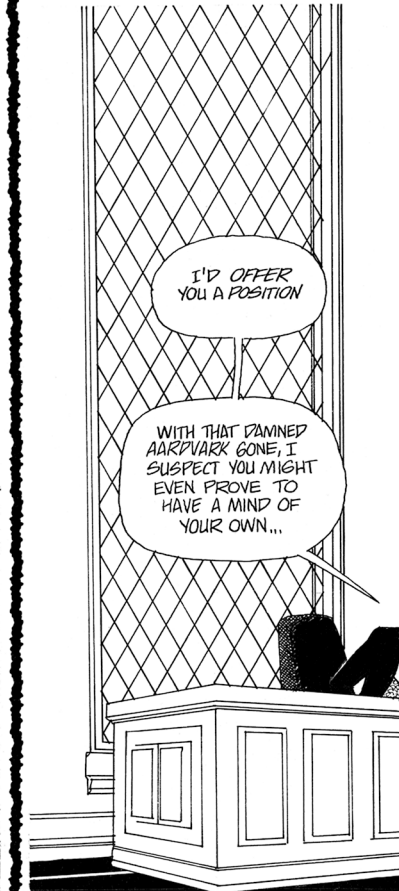
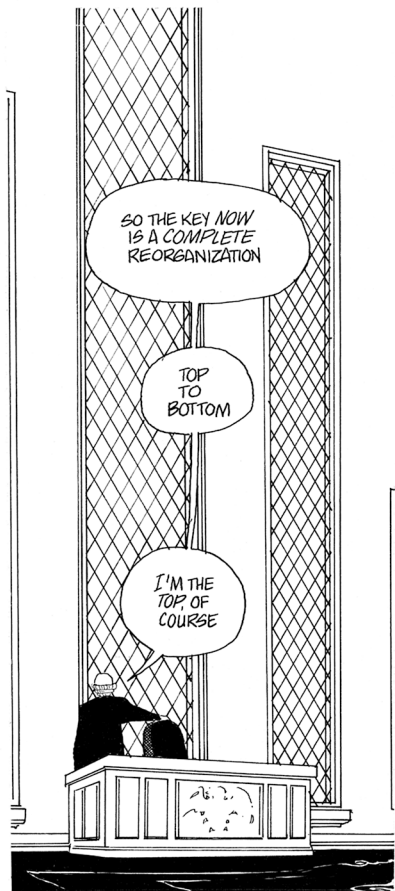
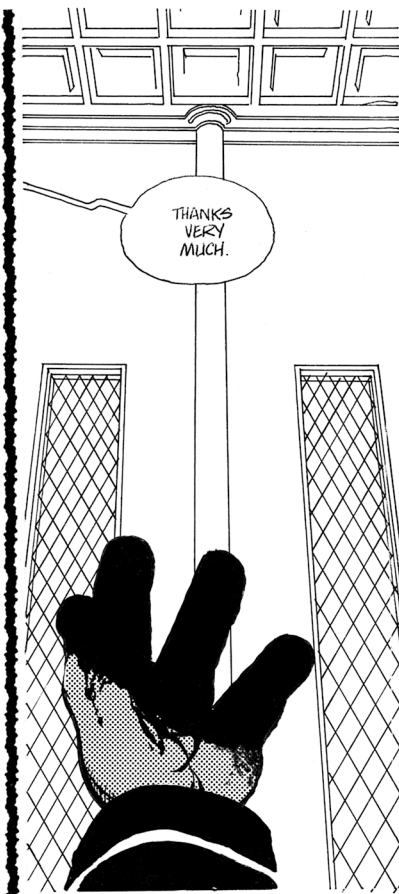
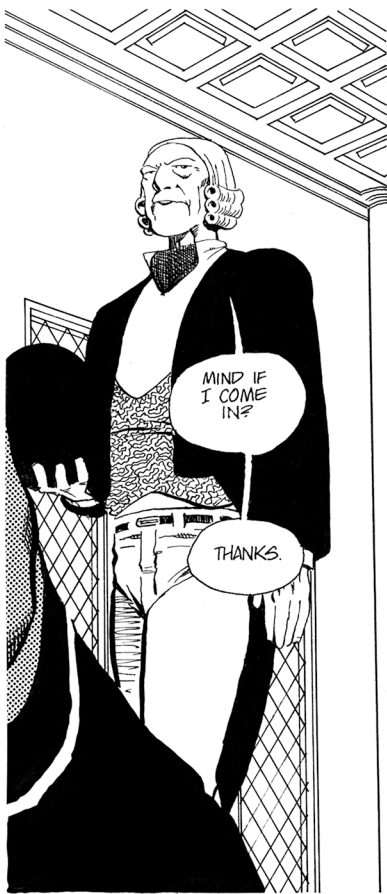


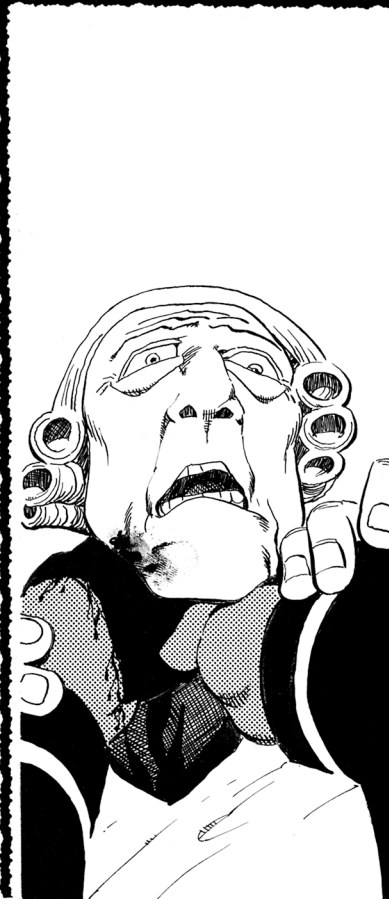
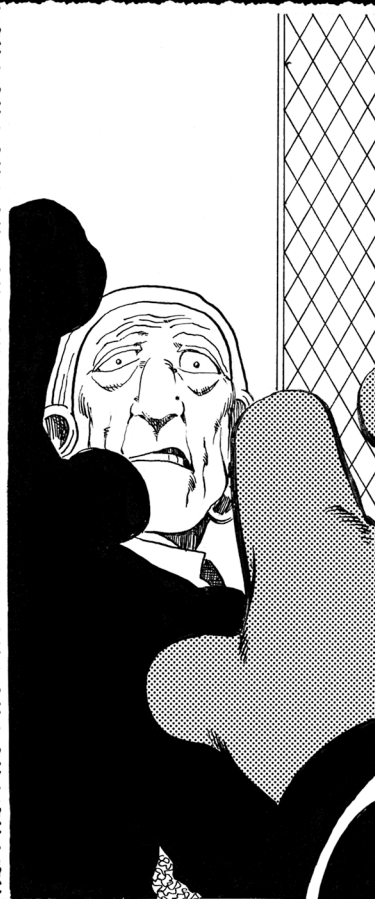
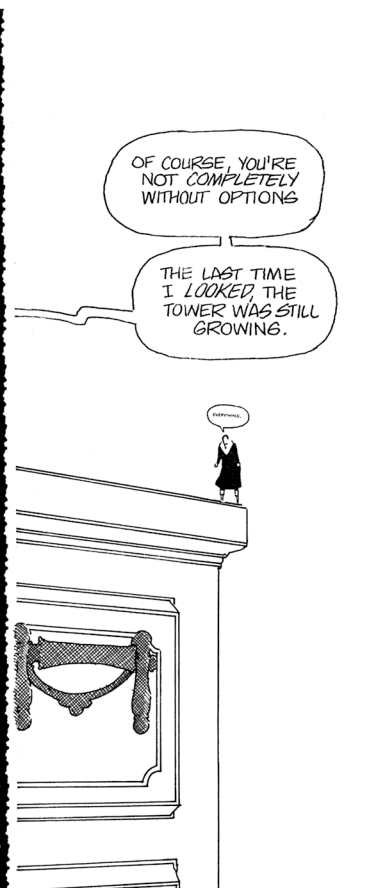


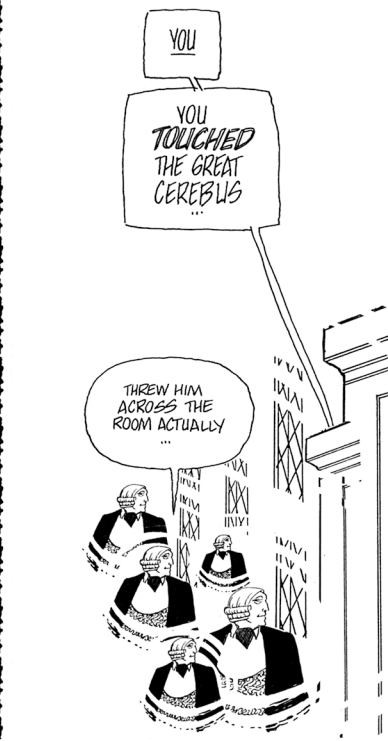


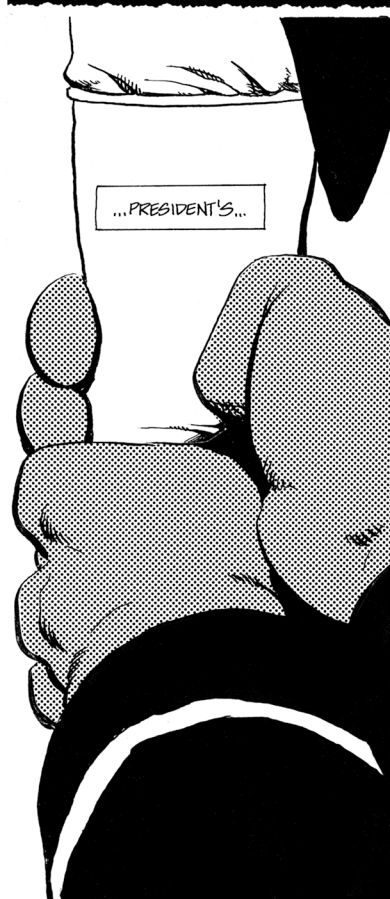
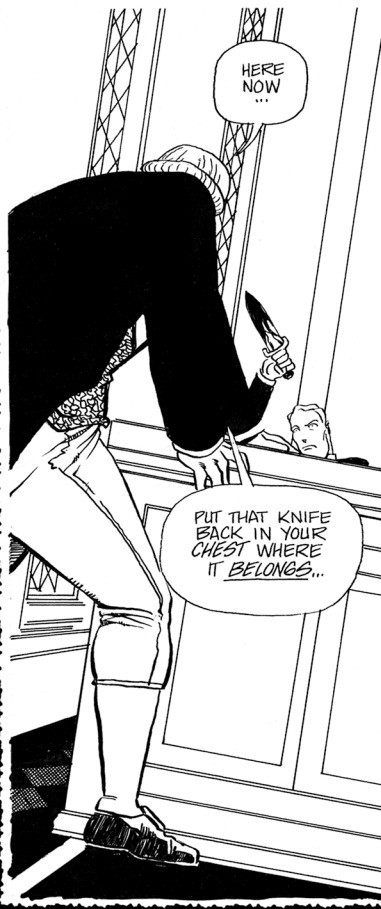


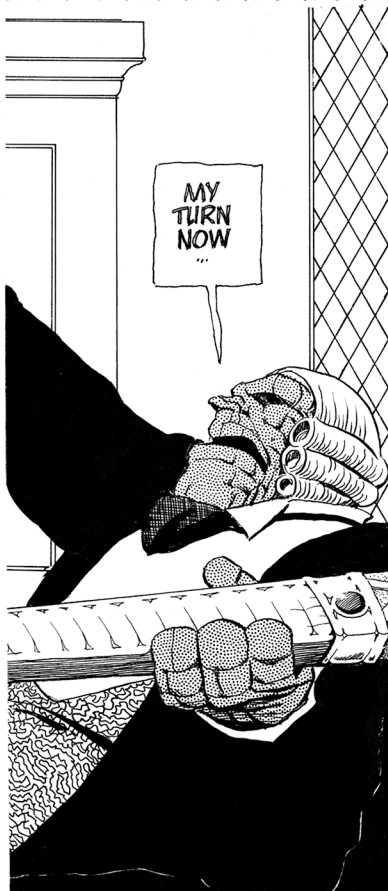
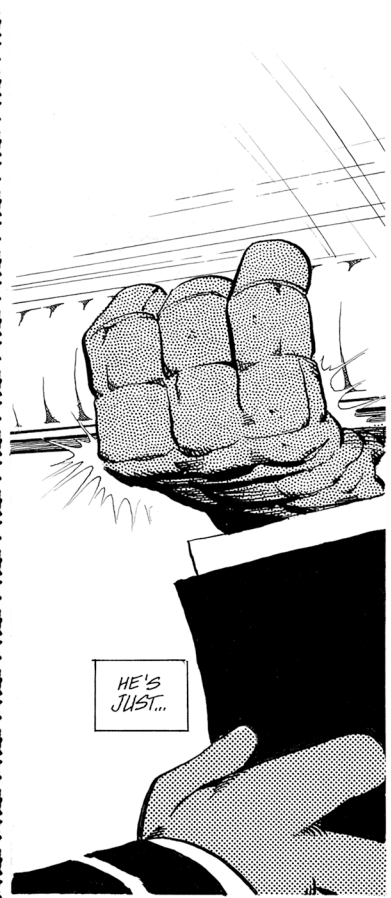


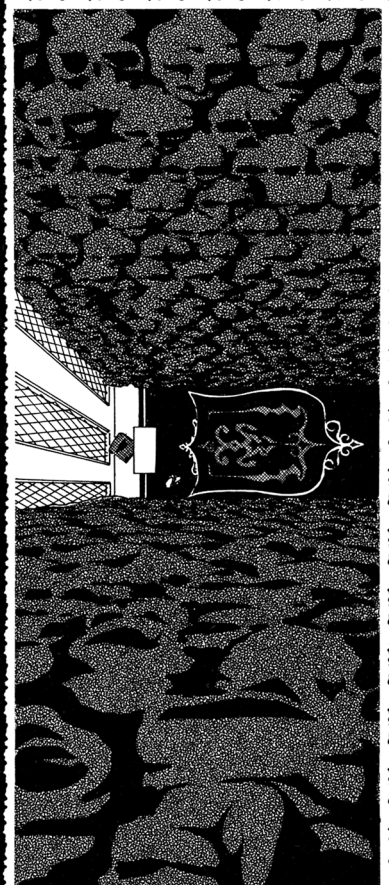
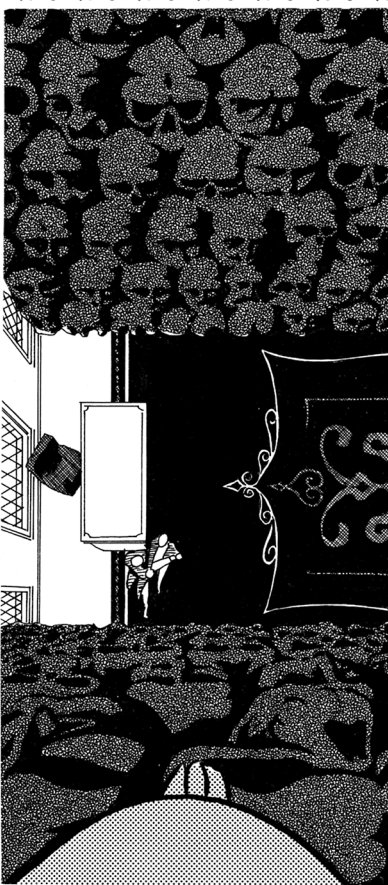
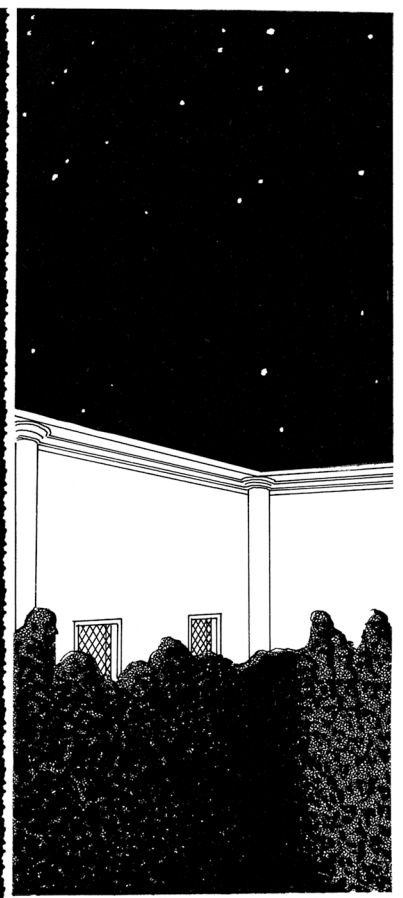
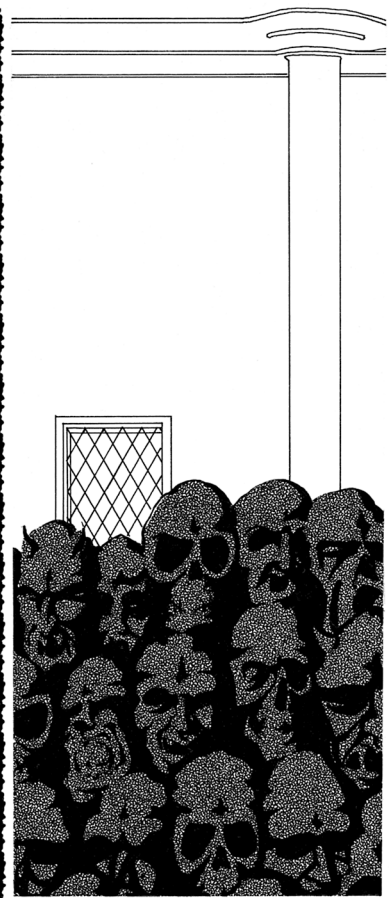
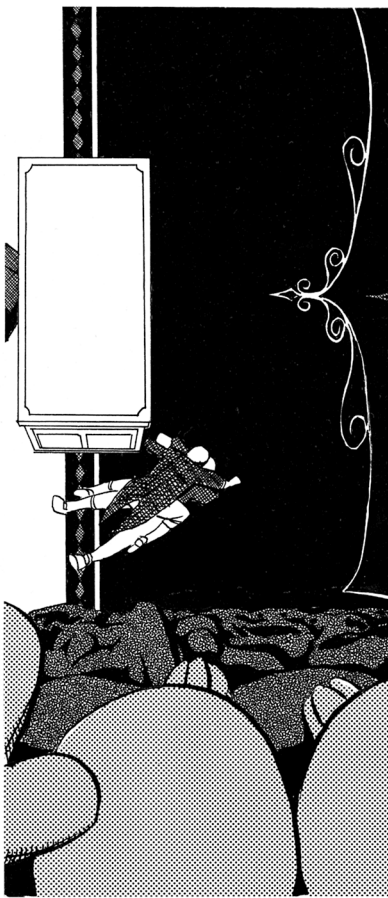


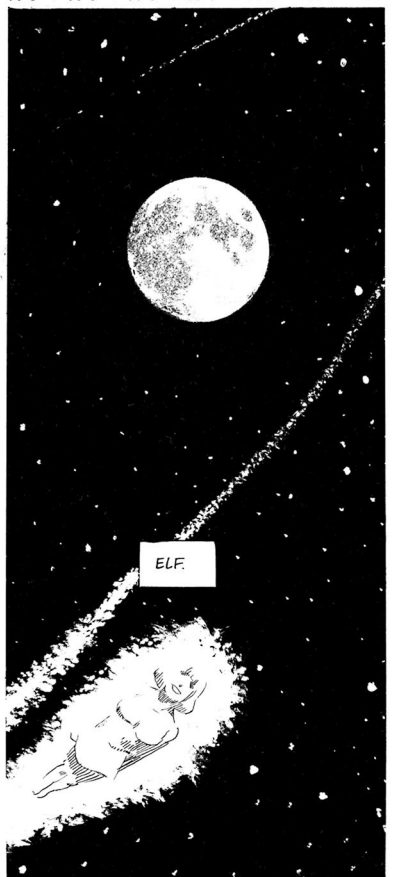
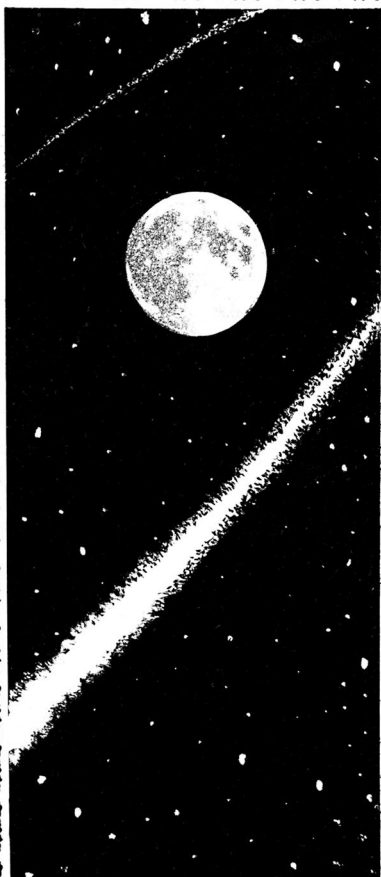
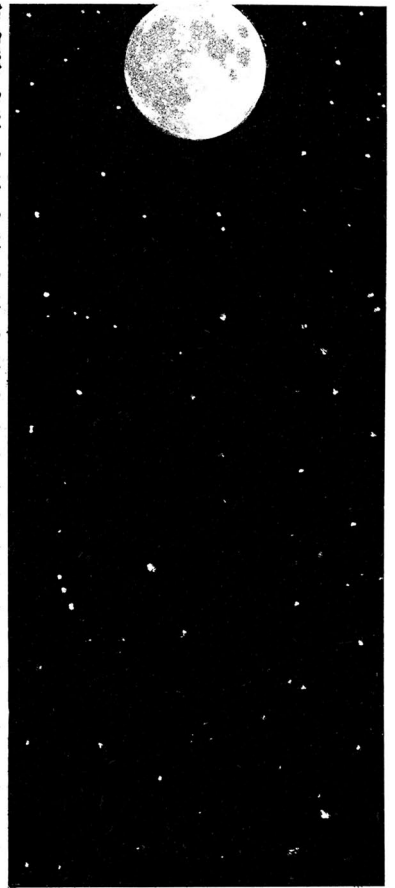
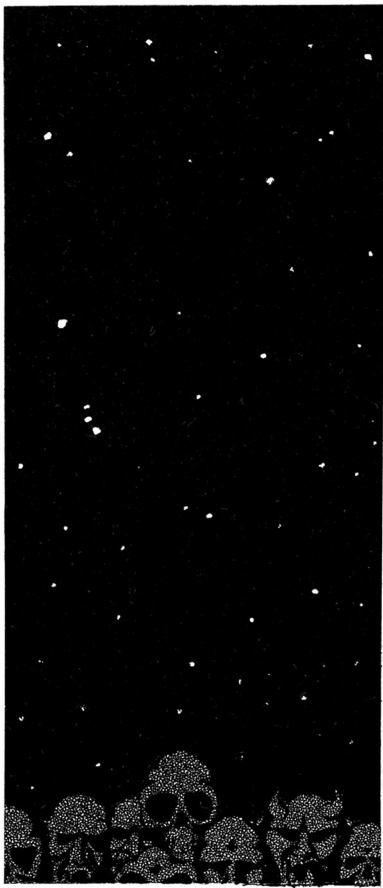






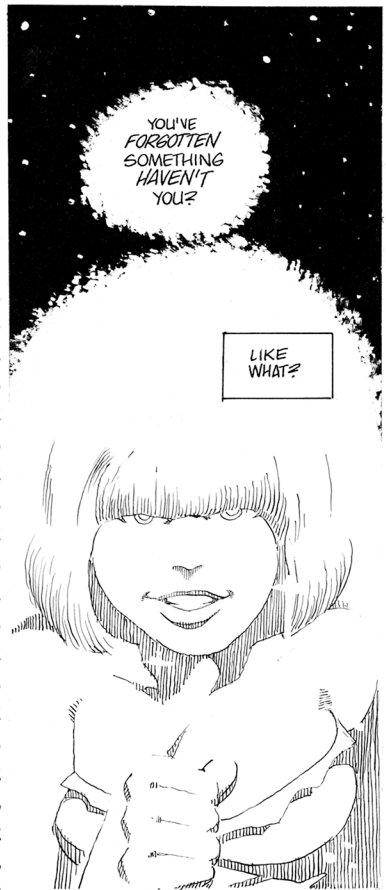








CEREBUS



YOU'VE
FORGOTTEN
SOMETHING
HAVEN'T
YOU?

LIKE
WHAT?



GUESS.

NO RIDDLES, ELF.
CEREBUS ISN'T
IN THE MOOD.



AW,
COME ON--
GUESS!

ELF.



ONE
GUESS.

ELF!



OHNNNNNNH...



YOU'RE AN
OLD POOP?
SOMETIMES,
YOU KNOW
THAT?

AYE.

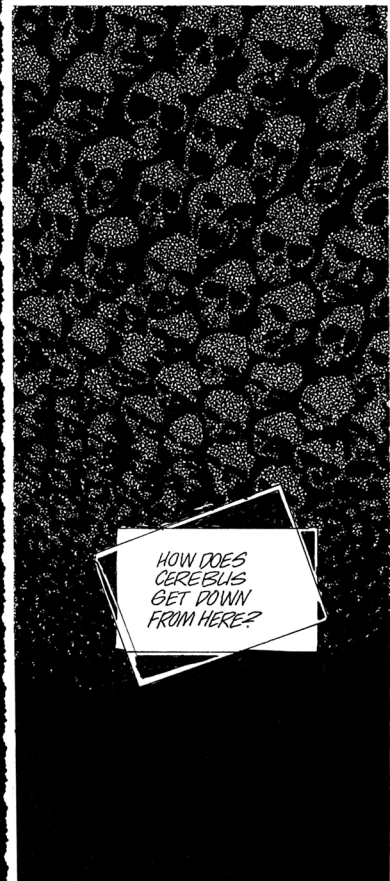


HERE.

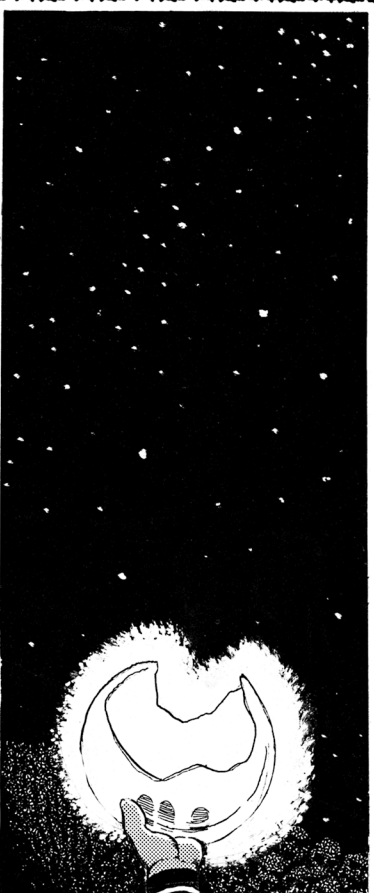
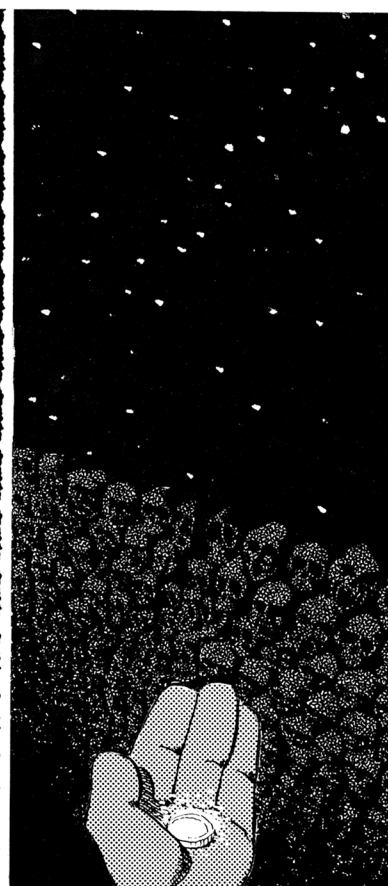
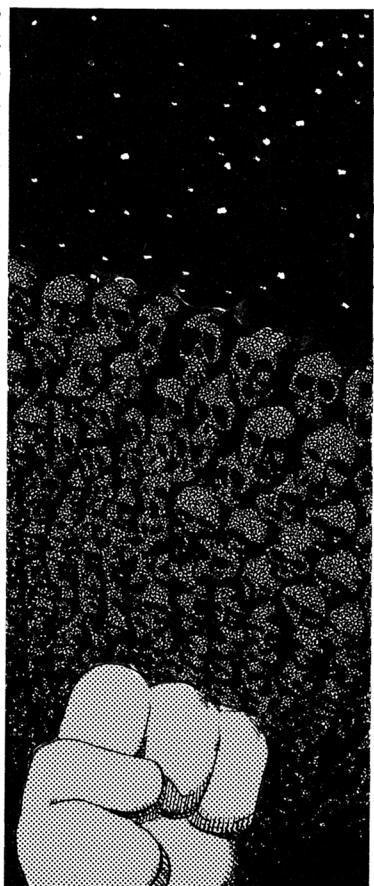
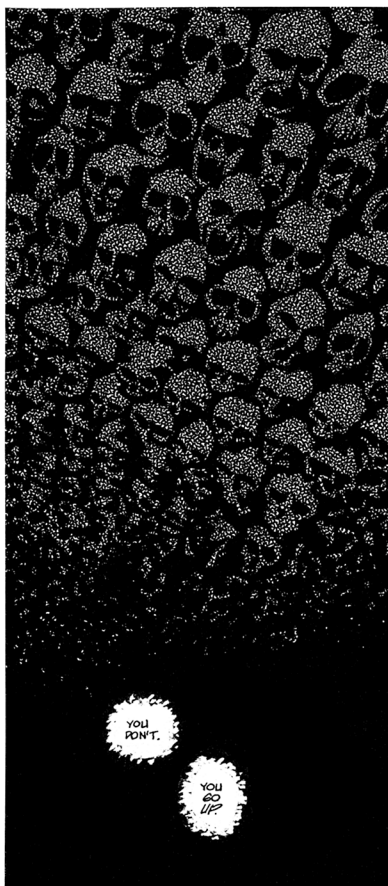


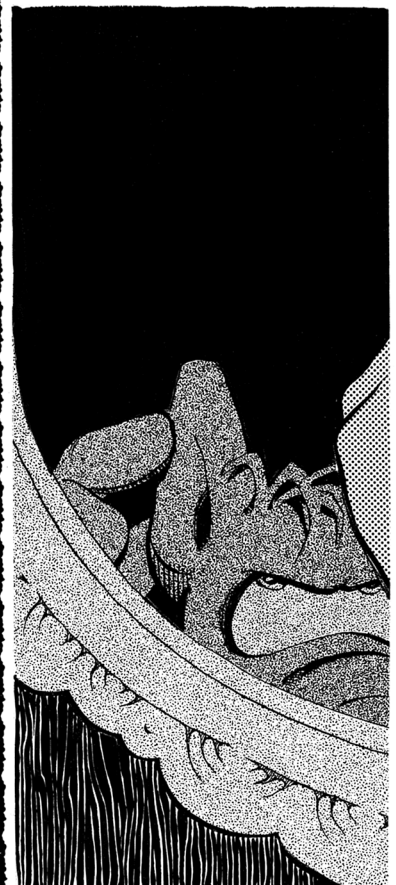
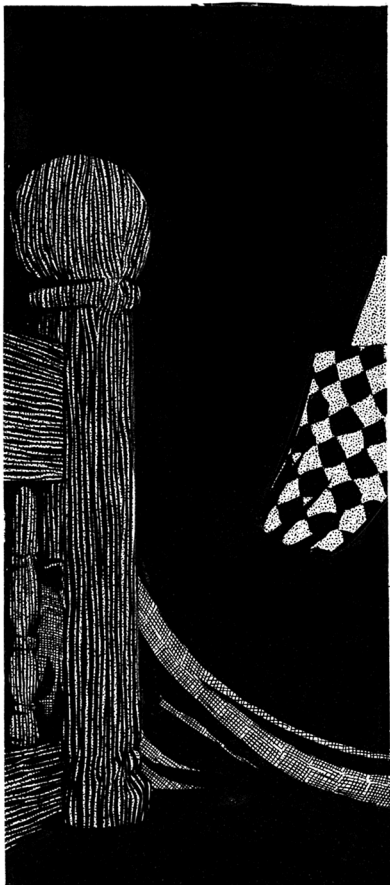
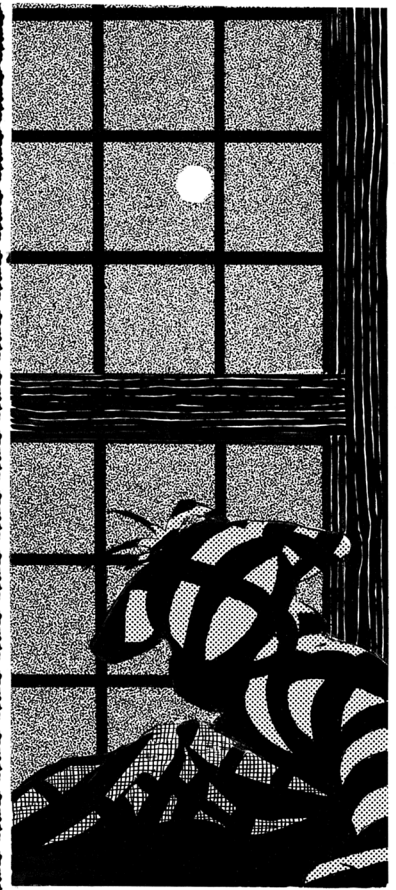
ELF!
WHERE ARE
YOU GOING?

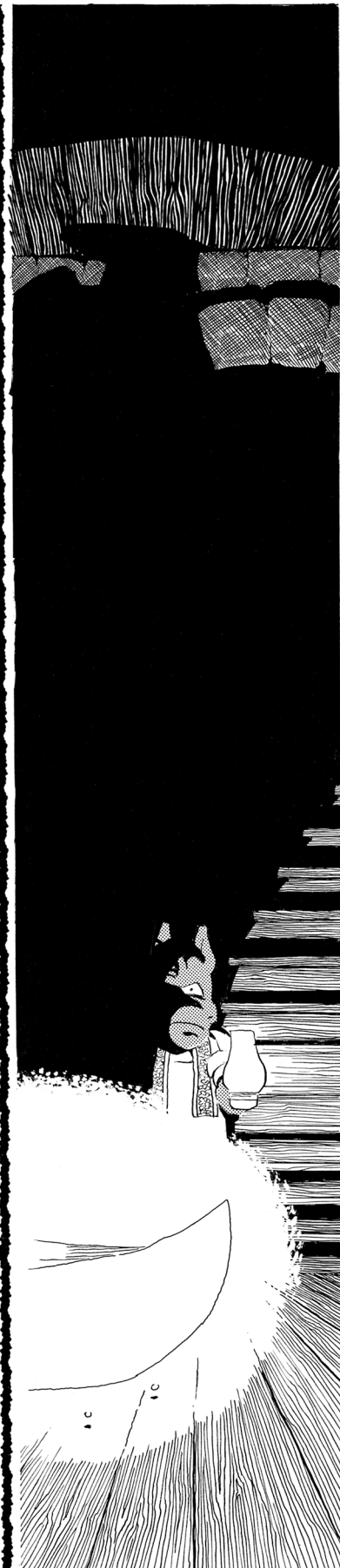
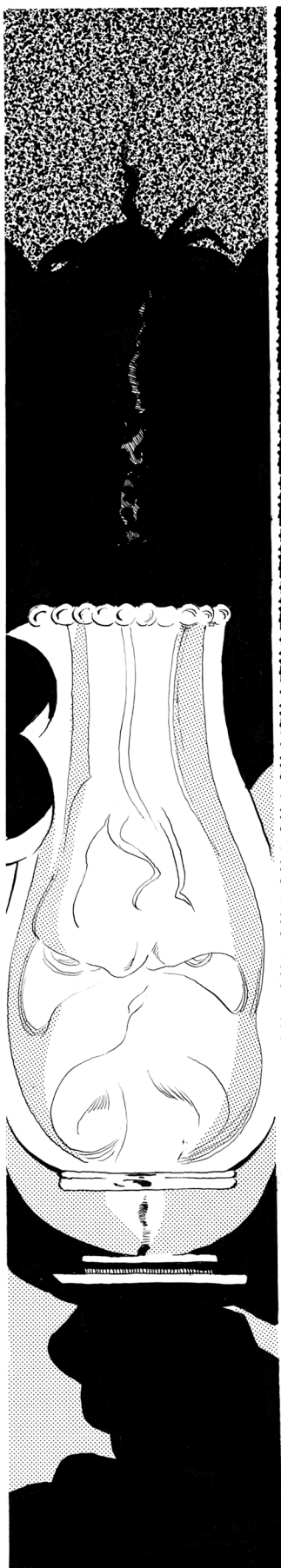
ELF!

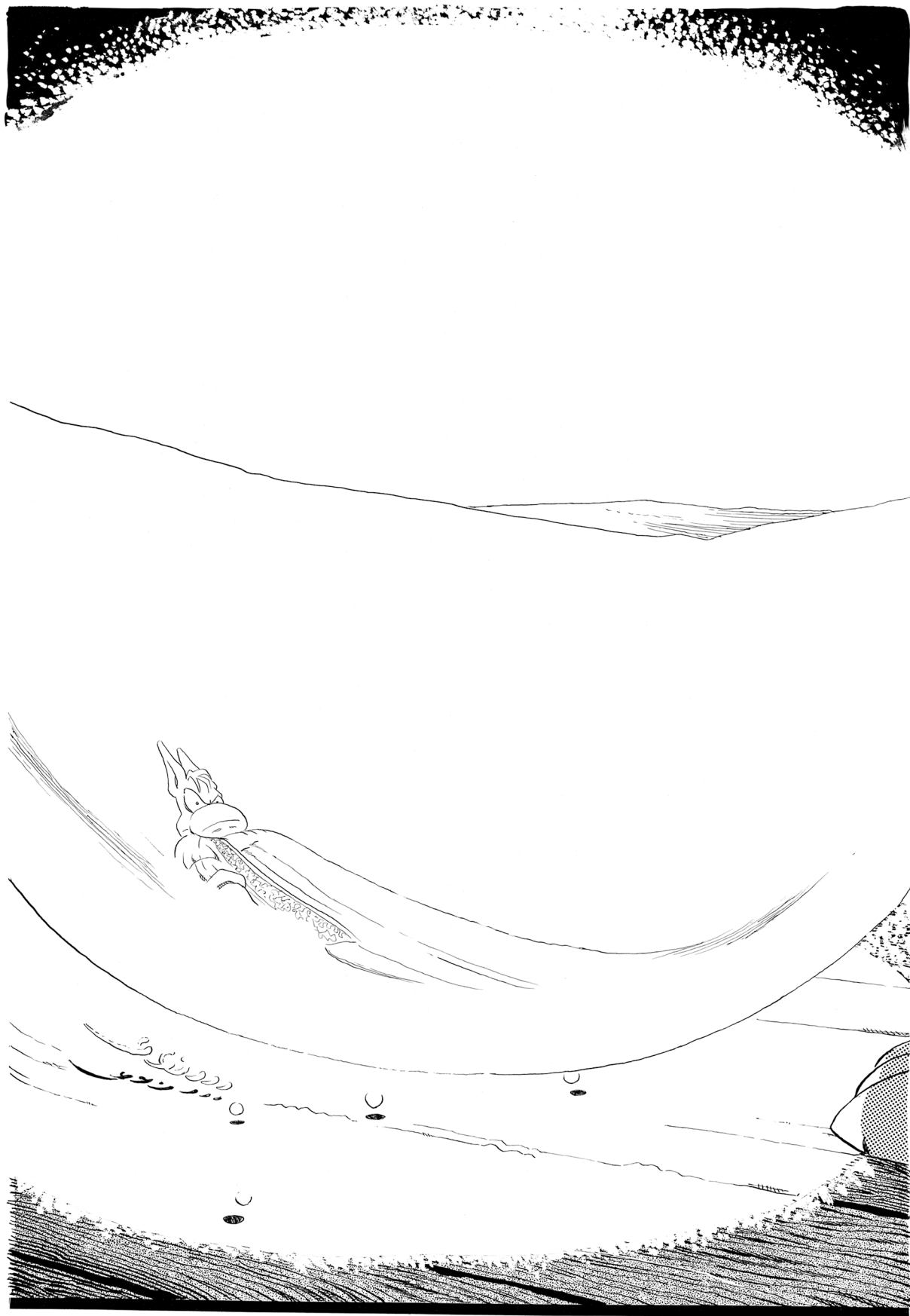


HOW DOES
CEREBSUS
GET DOWN
FROM HERE?



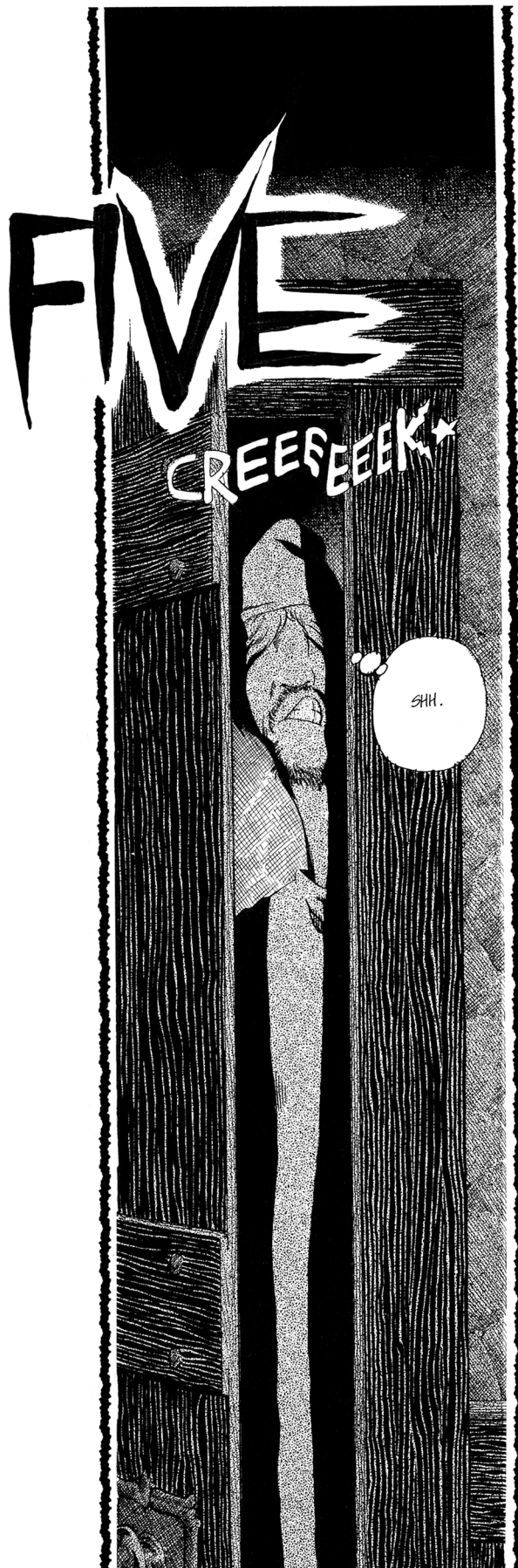


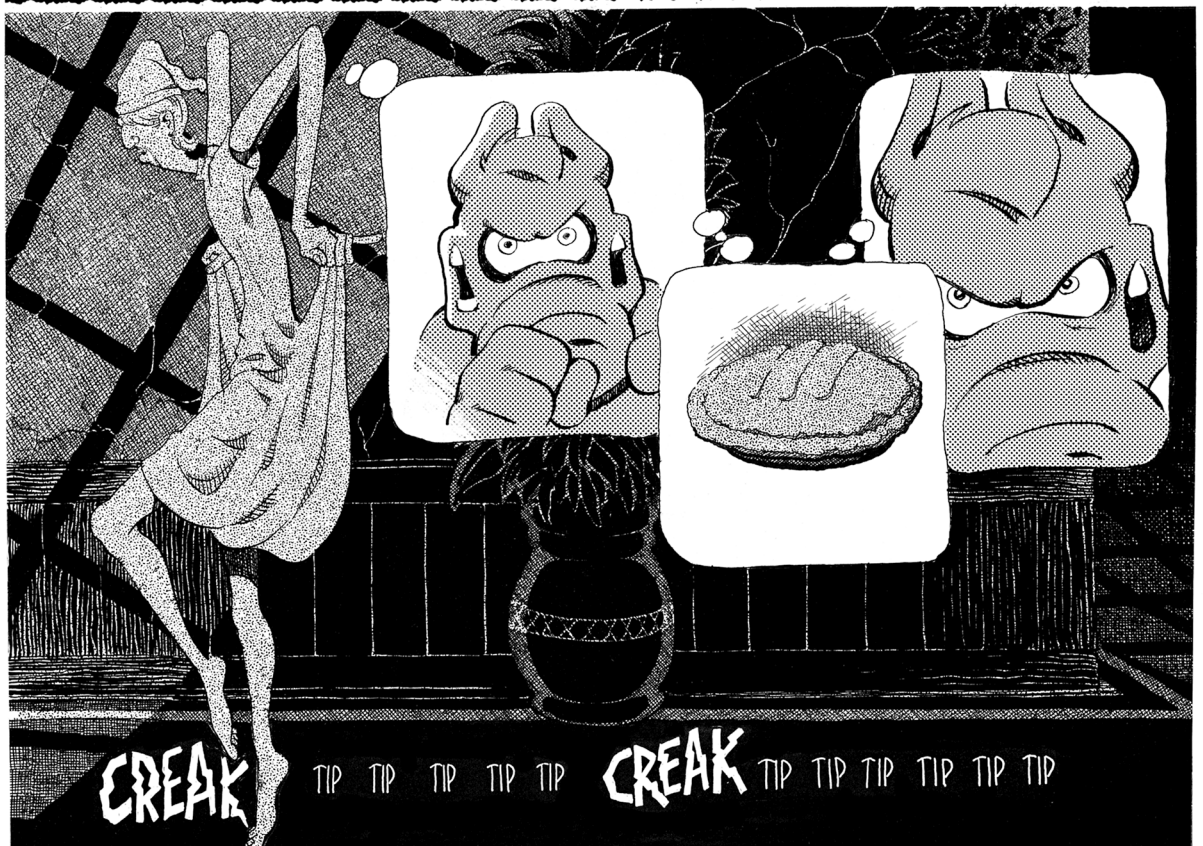
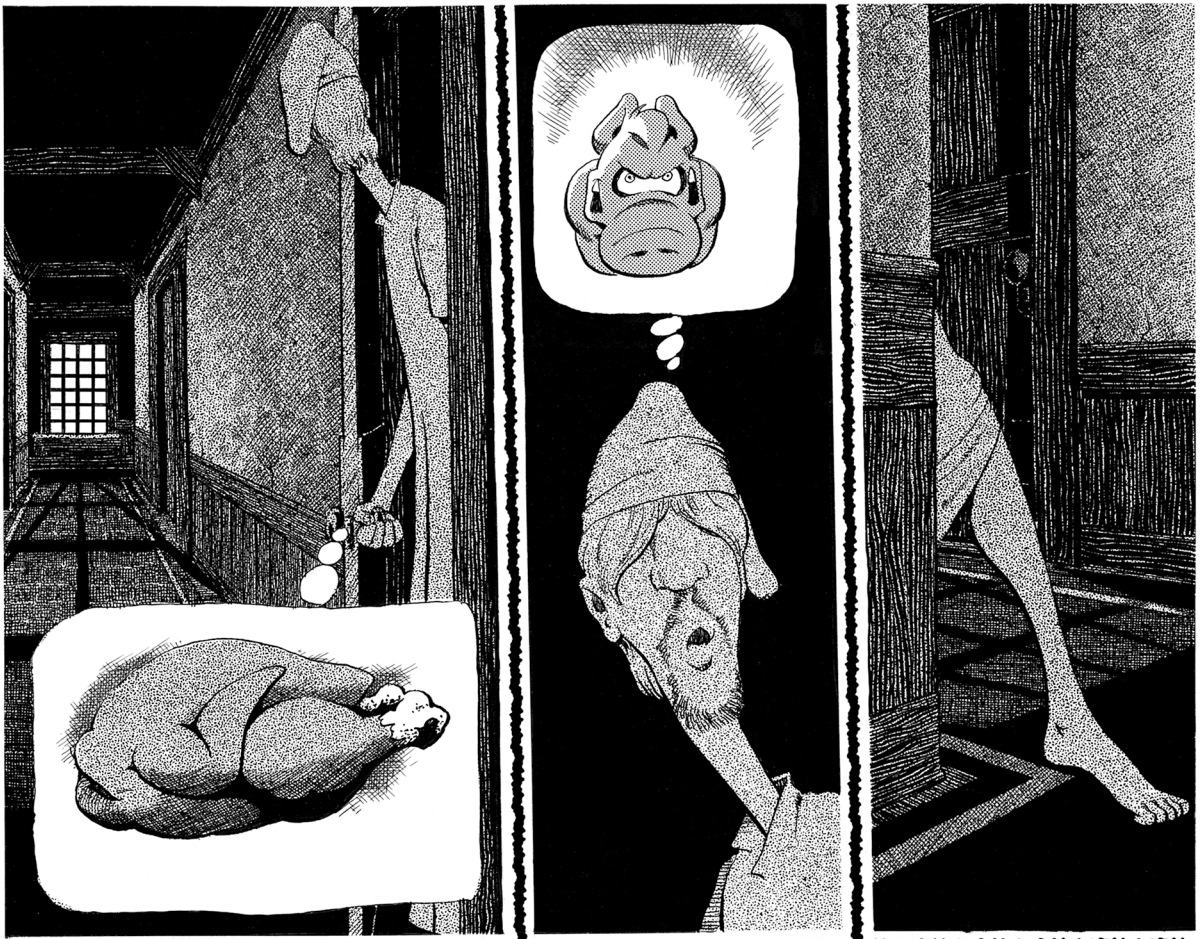


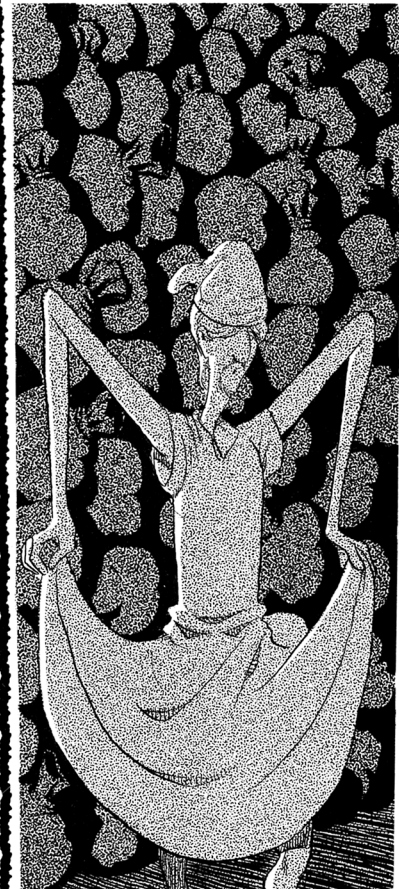
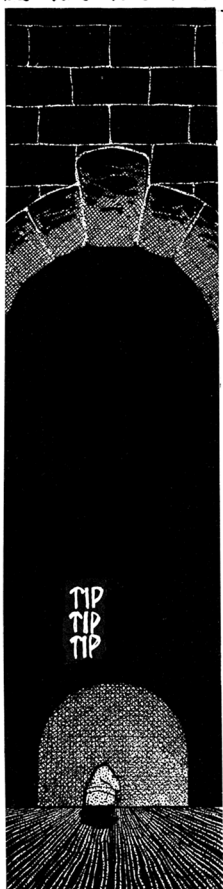
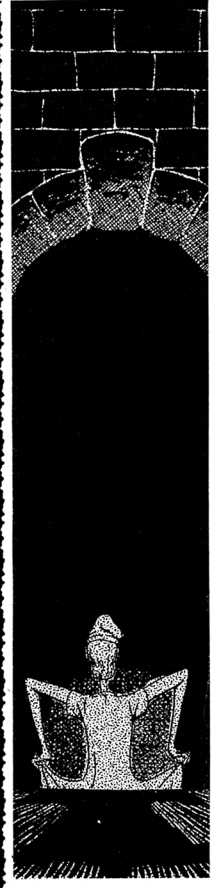
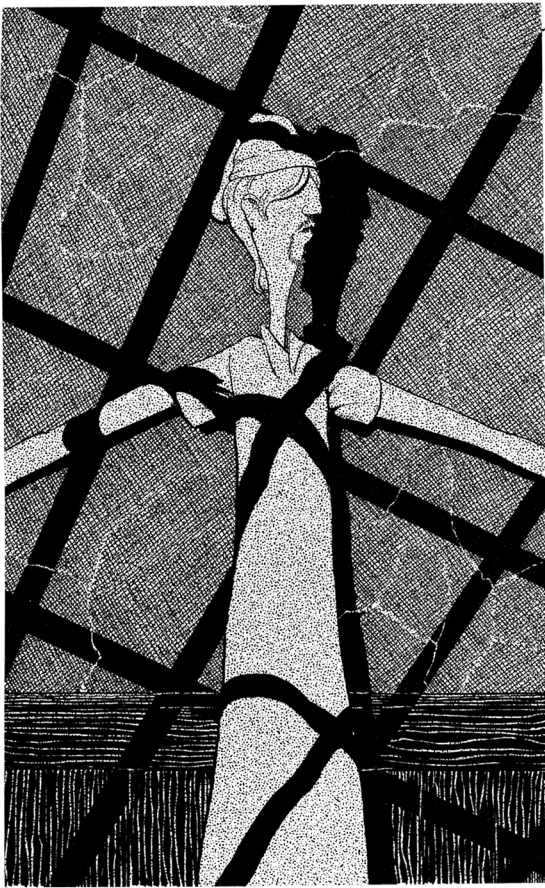


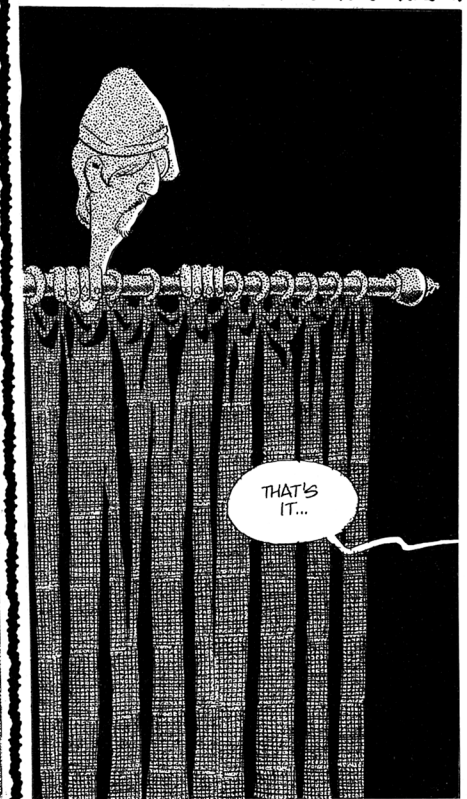
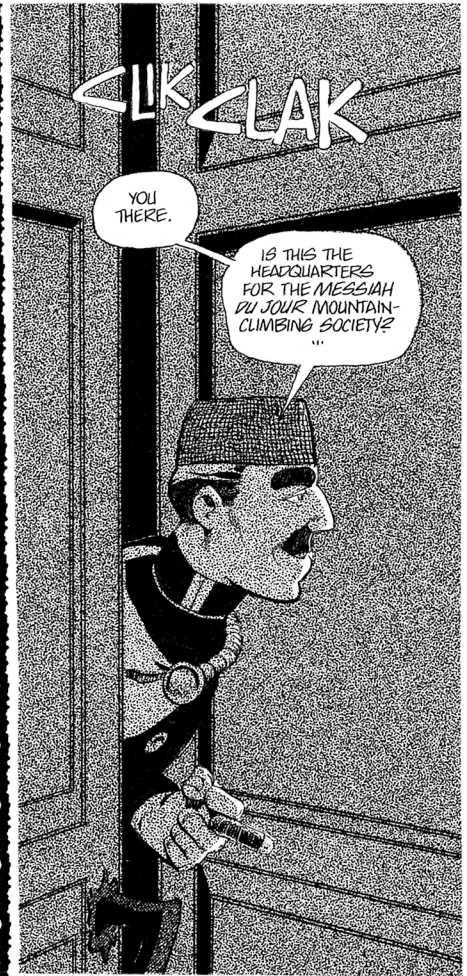
N E X T : B O O K F I V E :

BOOK FIVE
Astoria





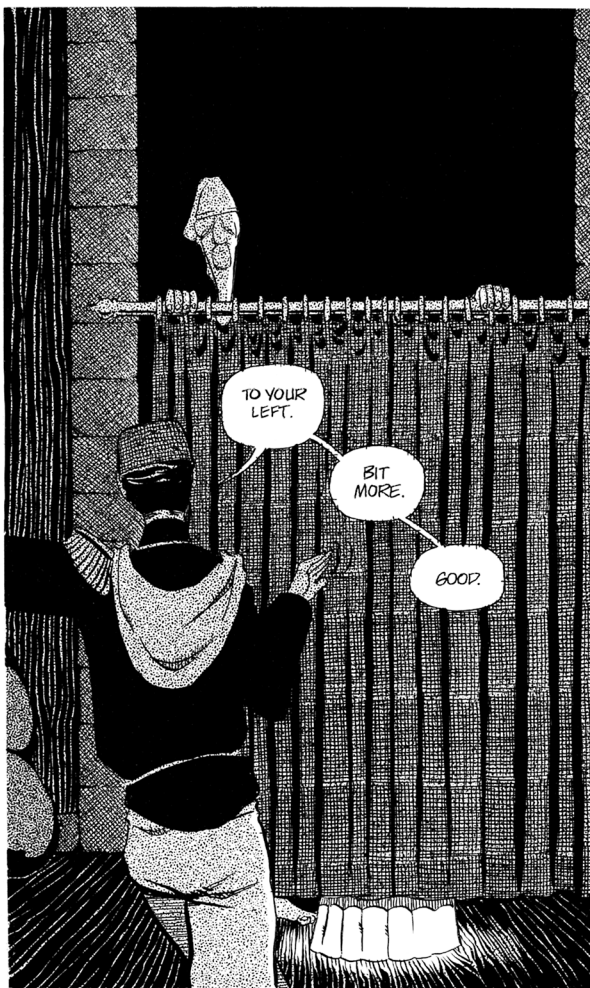






SLATS.

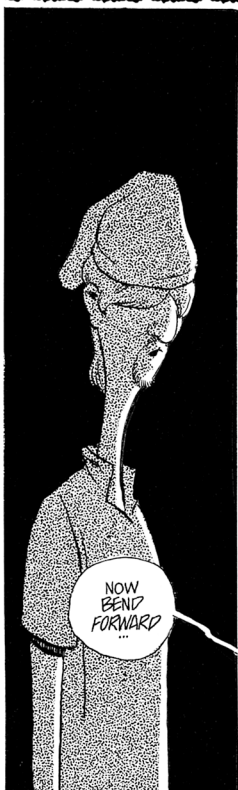
OVER
HERE



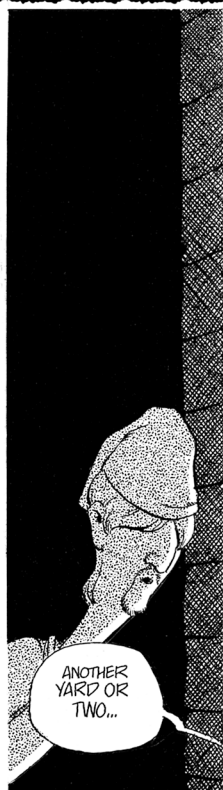
TO YOUR
LEFT.

BIT
MORE.

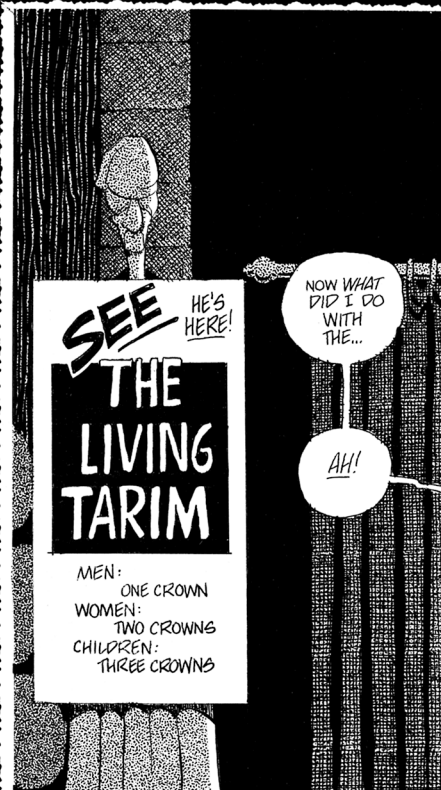
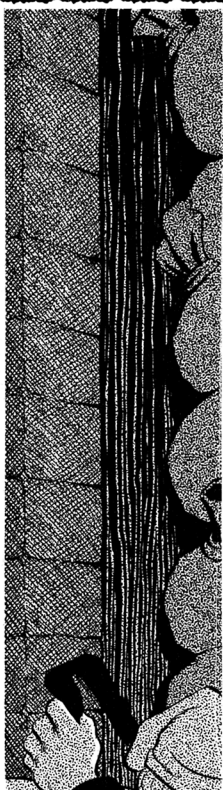
GOOD?



NOW
BEND
FORWARD
...



ANOTHER
YARD OR
TWO...

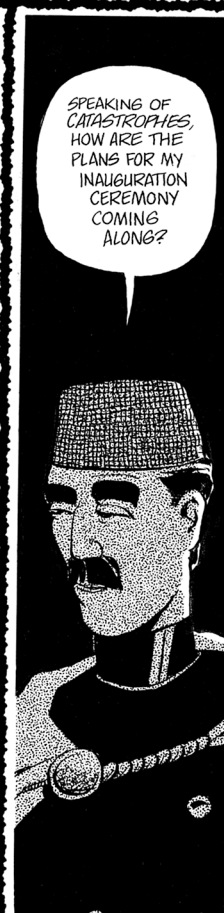
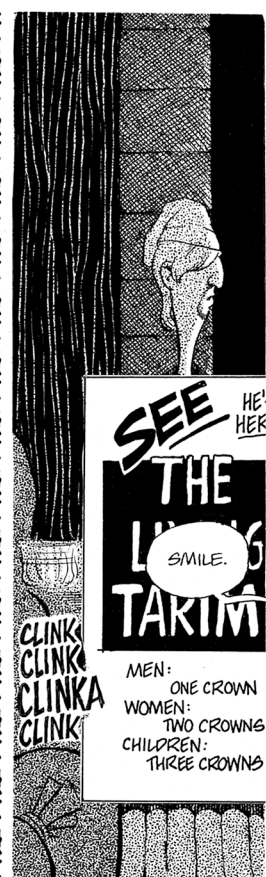
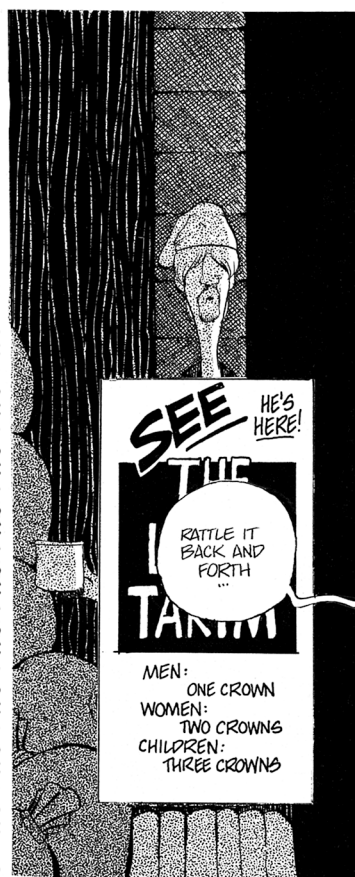


SEE **HE'S**
THE **HERE!**
LIVING
TARIM

MEN:
ONE CROWN
WOMEN:
TWO CROWNS
CHILDREN:
THREE CROWNS

NOW WHAT
DID I DO
WITH
THE...

AH!





NOT-A
SO GOOD.

WE RUN
INTO A
LITTLE-A
SNAG WIT'
D'KEYPUNCH
SPEAKER



KEYPUNCH
SPEAKER.
THAT SOUNDS
SUITABLY
GRISLY.

WHAT SORT
OF 'SNAG'?



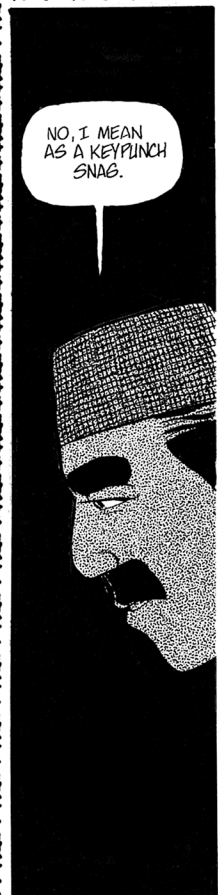
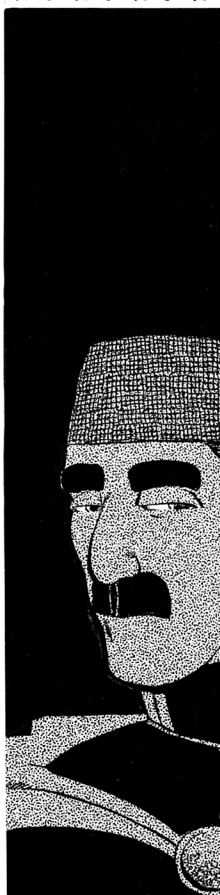
WE NO FIND
ANYAONE SAY
NICE THINGS
FOR YOU
IN FRONT
OF EVEYBODY
...



WHAT ABOUT
MY MOTHER?



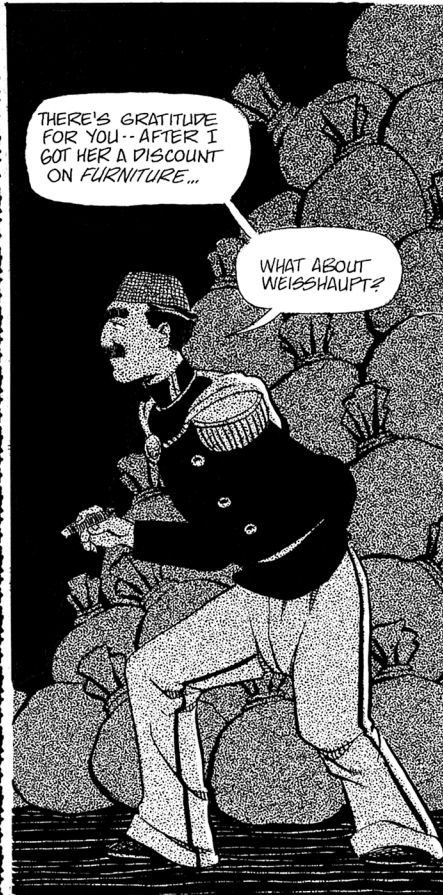
SHE'S A
TOO OLD
F'ME.



NO, I MEAN
AS A KEYPUNCH
SNAG.



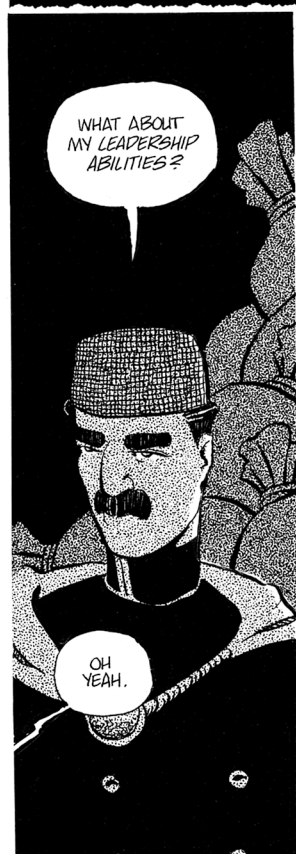
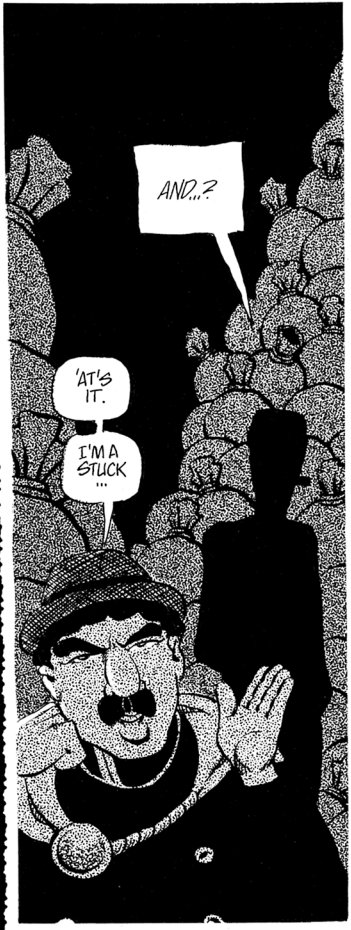
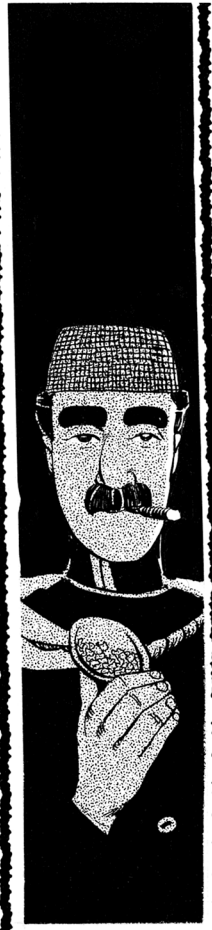
SHE SAY SHE
PROMISE NOT-A
TO HECKLE
IF YOU F'GET
ABOUT D'RENT
INCREASE
...

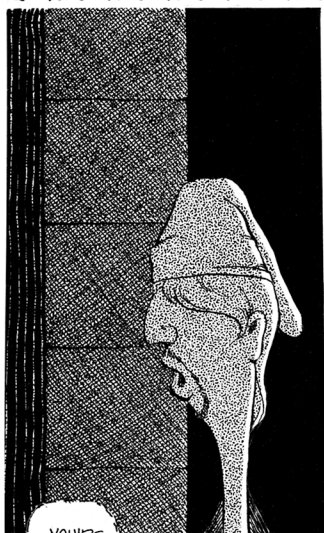


THERE'S GRATITUDE
FOR YOU -- AFTER I
GOT HER A DISCOUNT
ON FURNITURE...

WHAT ABOUT
WEISSHAUPT?



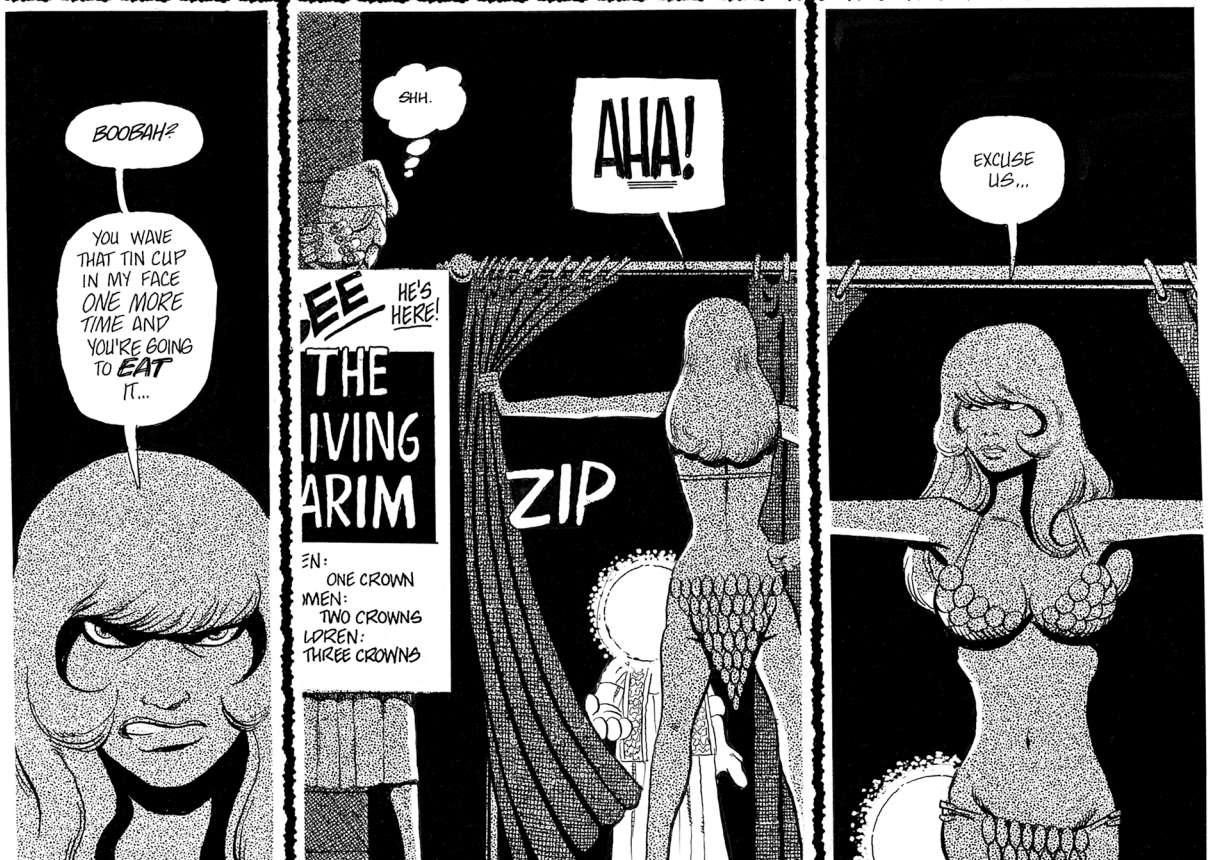
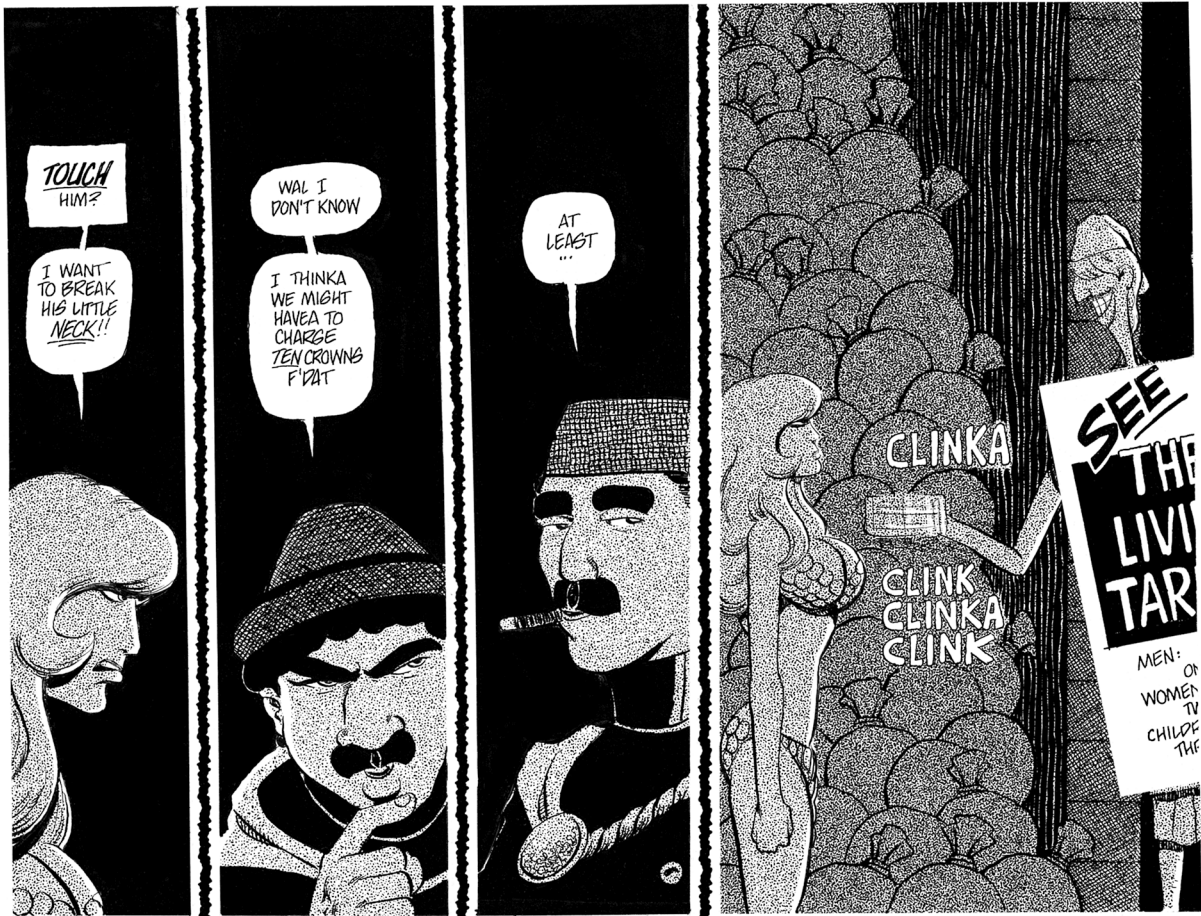


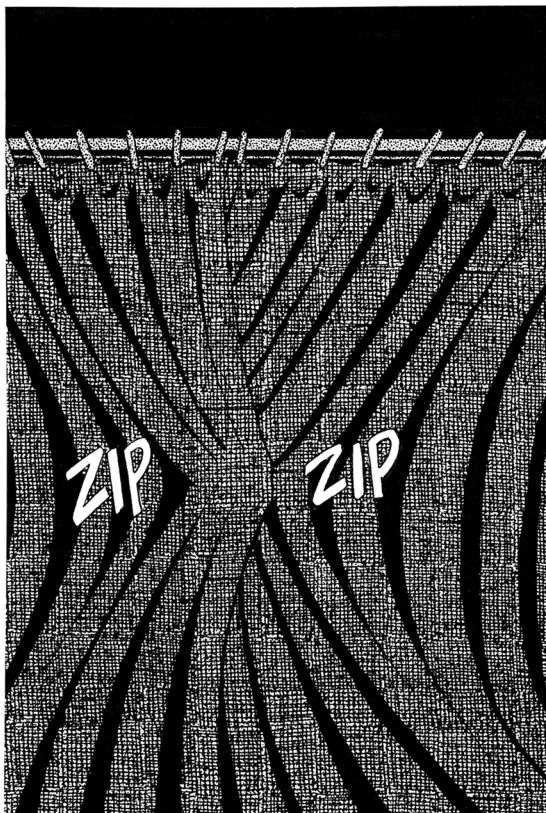


SEE THE

CLINKA
CLINKA
CLINK
THE





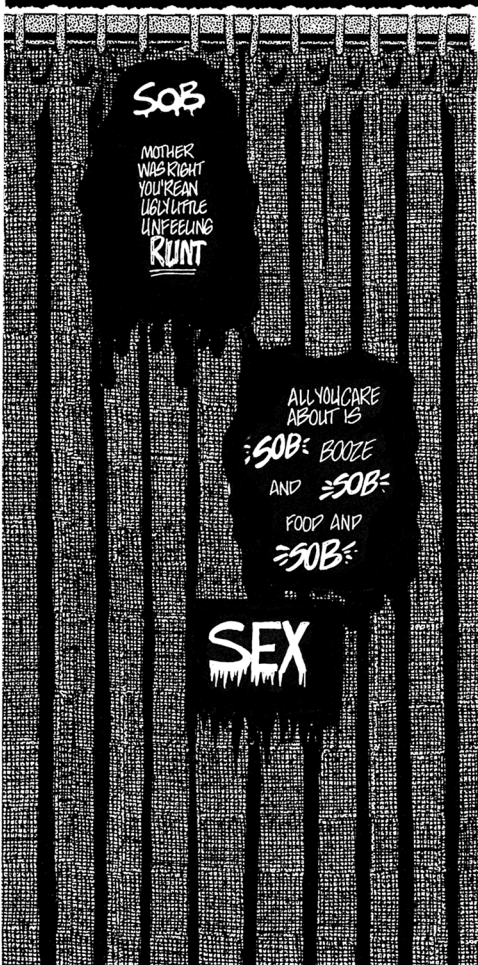


WHO DO YOU
THINK YOU
ARE ANYWAY?

I JUST FOUND OUT
THAT THE AFTER-
NOON I LEFT
YOU HAD BEAR
BRING YOU A
SLEAZY
BLONDE

DON'T BOTHER
TO DENY IT.
YOU WERE
SEEN
TOGETHER

SLAP!



I JUST WANTED
YOU T.T. TO BE
H-H-HAPPY

YOU NEVER
LOVED ME

ALL YOU
EVER CARED
ABOUT WAS
YOURSELF

I HATE
YOU I
HATE
YOU!! I
HATE
YOU!!!

WAP!

WHY CAN'T
WE GET
ALONG,
HON?

W-WHY DO
WE ALWAYS
F-FIGHT?

SNIFF
= SNIFF =

I ASKED
YOU A
QUESTION

WAP

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!
I'M TRYING TO SAVE
OUR MARRIAGE...!

I'M TRYING TO
FIND OUT WHAT'S
WRONG
WITH US...!

AND
YOU!

YOU JUST
...JUST...
STAND
THERE...

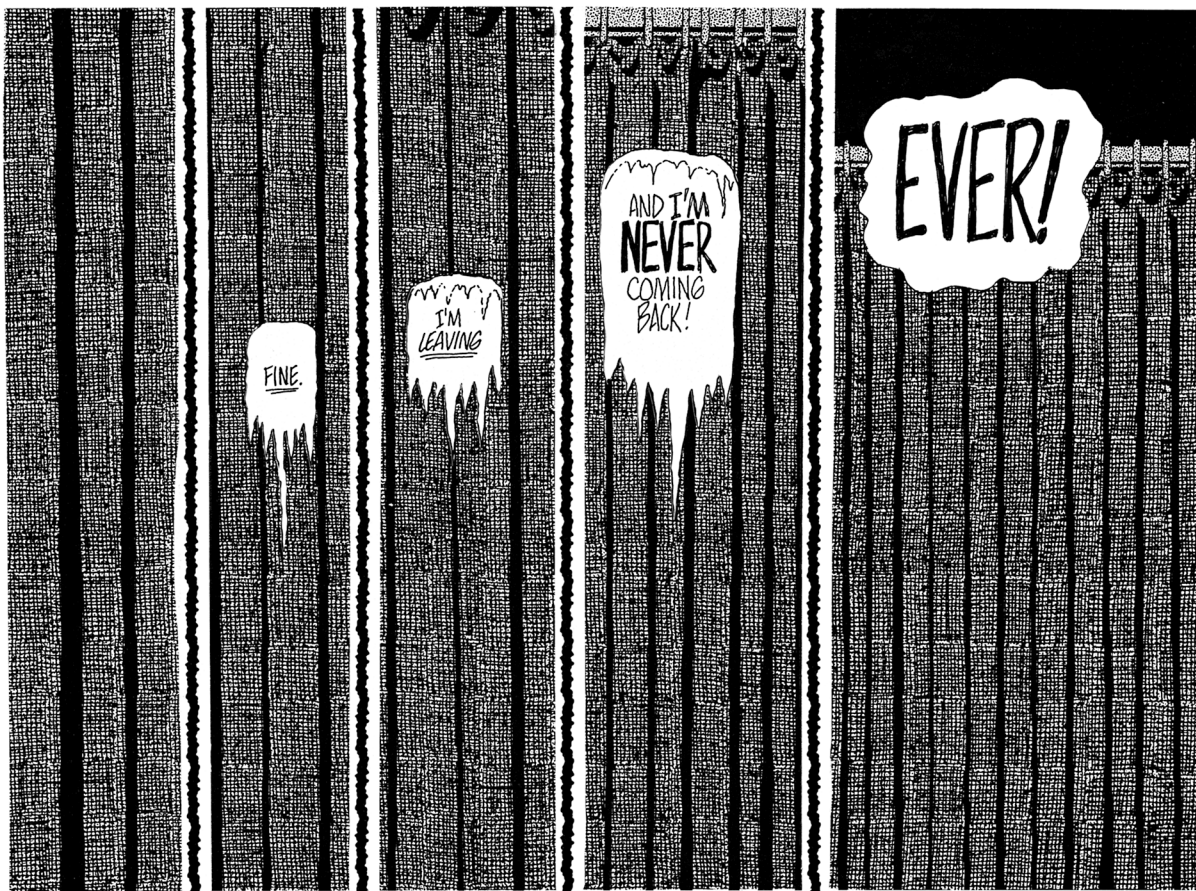
...GLOWING!

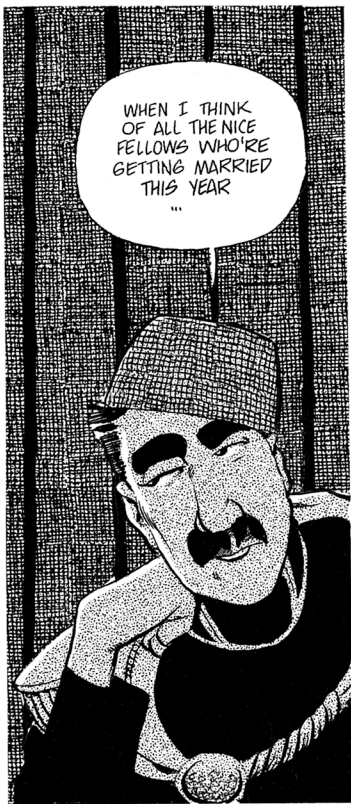
SNAT

I-I'll G-GO
AWAY.

SNUF

IF... THAT'S
...WHAT...
YOU WANT.





WHEN I THINK
OF ALL THE NICE
FELLOWS WHO'RE
GETTING MARRIED
THIS YEAR



'EY! SHE'S A DISFIGURATE
YOU' TOURIST
A TRAP..

WADDA WE
DO NOW?



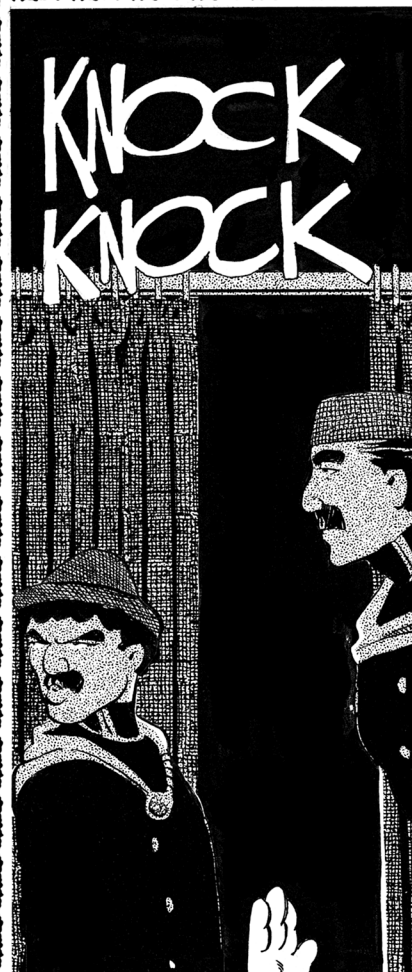
WE COULD PUT A
BATON IN HIS HAND
AND LET HIM LEAD
THE INAUGURATION
PARADE..

I NO
THINK
SO..

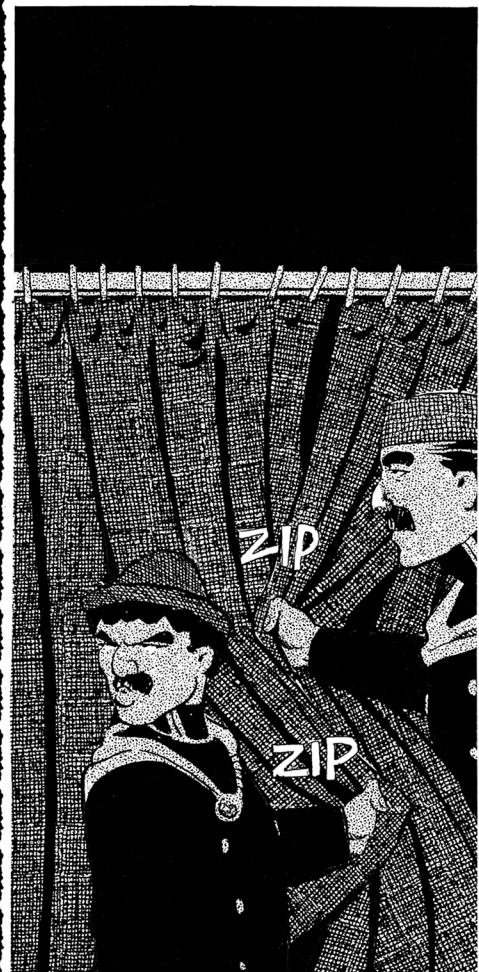


WE COULD PUT HIM
ON TOP OF A POLE
AND USE HIM TO
DIRECT TRAFFIC
...

SHU'E!
ATSA FINE
WAY TO SAVE
A MANKIND!



KNOCK
KNOCK



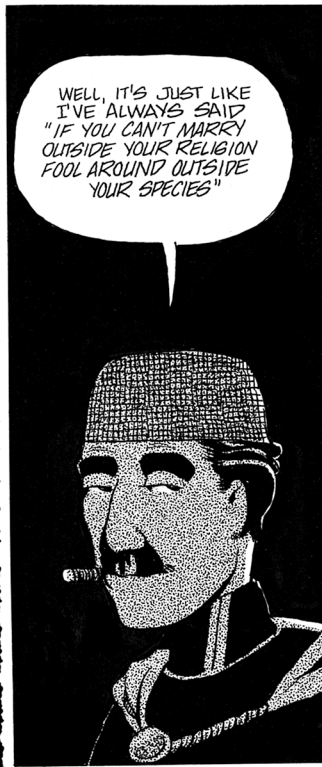
ZIP

ZIP



WUDDA YOU? CRAZY? HE'S A BISHOP! A BISHOP HE'S A NO MARRY NOBODY.

ESPECIALLY, HE'S A NO MARRY OUTSIDE HIS A RELIGION...



WELL, IT'S JUST LIKE I'VE ALWAYS SAID "IF YOU CAN'T MARRY OUTSIDE YOUR RELIGION FOOL AROUND OUTSIDE YOUR SPECIES"



'EV! YOU SAYIN' HE'S A DOFFIN' DA DUCK? ANH? 'ATTSA BLASPHEMY!



OH I DON'T KNOW...

CALL ME A SENTIMENTAL OLD FOOL; I THINK THEY MAKE A CLUTE COUPLE



HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK WE CAN SOAK THEM FOR?

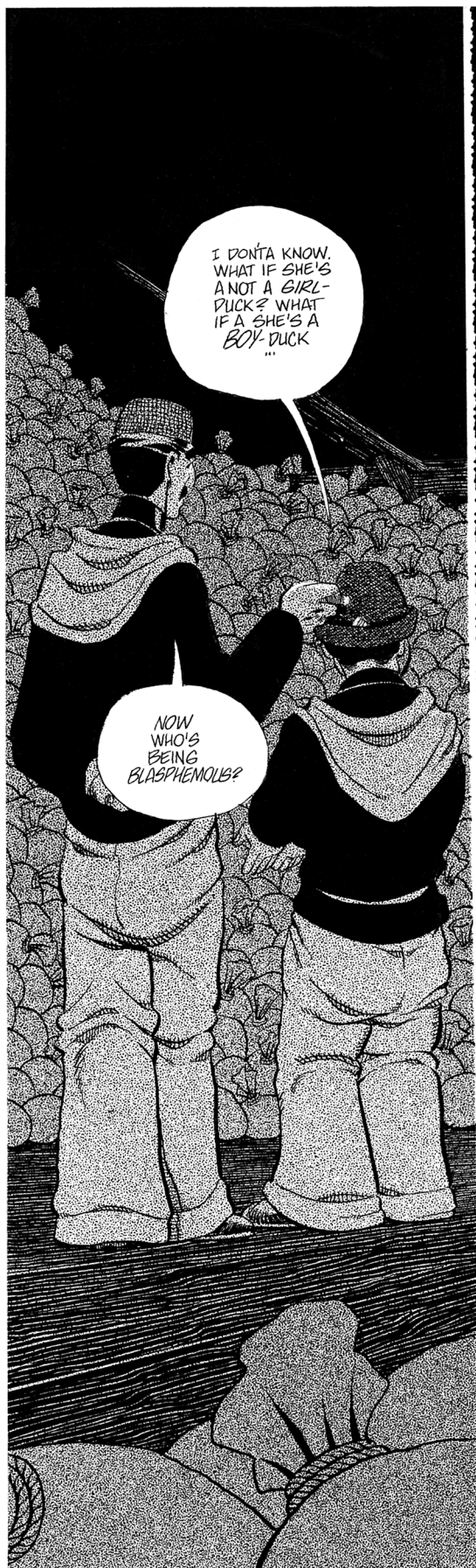


YOU CAN'T SOAK A DUCK.

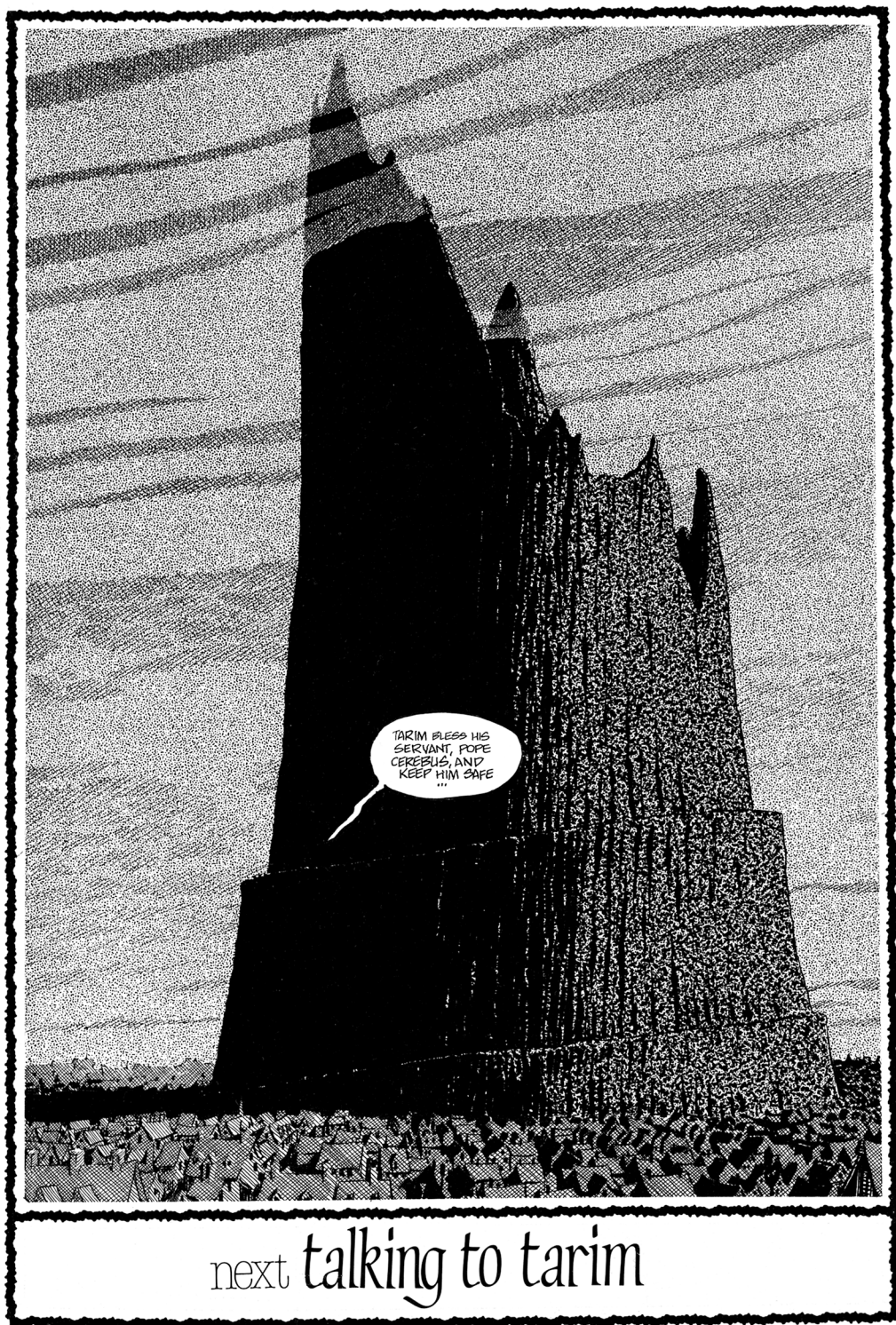
DEY FLOAT.



LET'S TRY THIS AGAIN FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE ... I SAY WE CHARGE THEM FIVE CROWNS... TWO FOR THE BISHOP AND THREE FOR HIS GIRLFRIEND ...









WELL
WELL
WELL

SO IT'S
FINALLY
GOING TO
HAPPEN.

CAN YOU
IMAGINE?

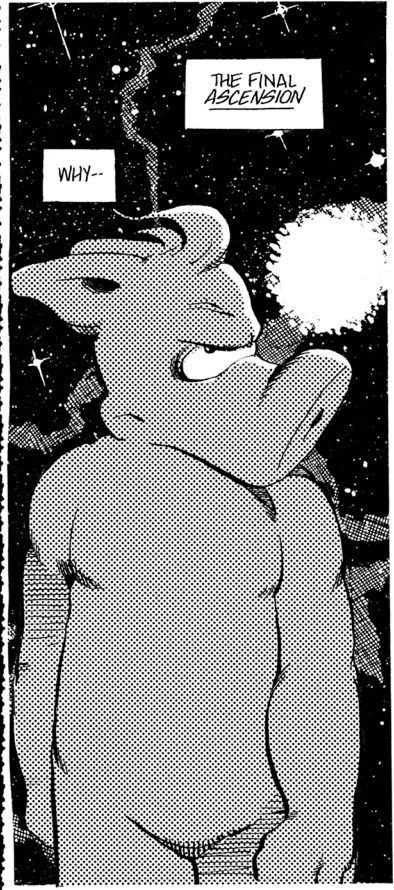
Whew.



THOUSANDS
AND THOUSANDS
OF YEARS



WHAT'S
GOING
TO HAPPEN?

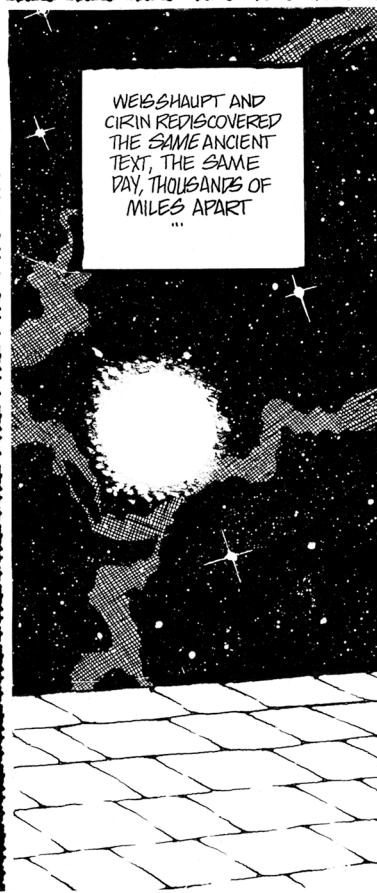


THE FINAL
ASCENSION

WHY--



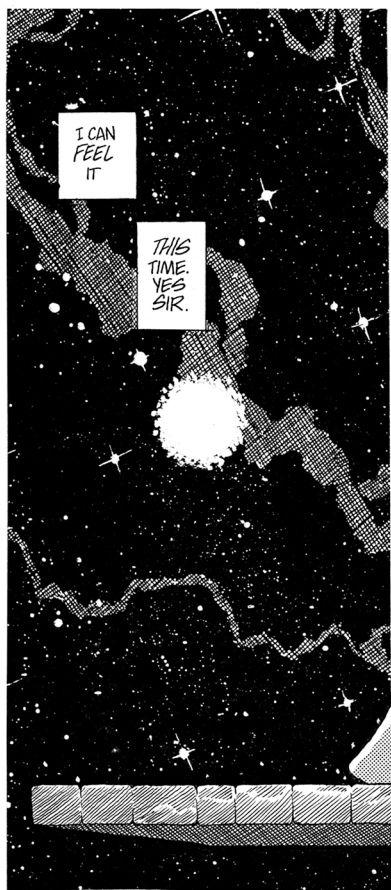
IT'S REALLY
GOING TO
HAPPEN
...



WEISSHAUPT AND
CIRIN REDISCOVERED
THE SAME ANCIENT
TEXT, THE SAME
DAY, THOUSANDS OF
MILES APART
...

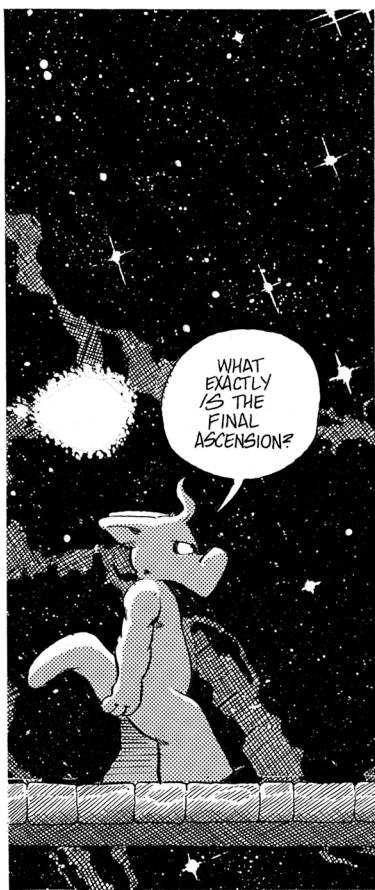


YOU STARTED
GATHERING
ALL OF THE
GOLD...

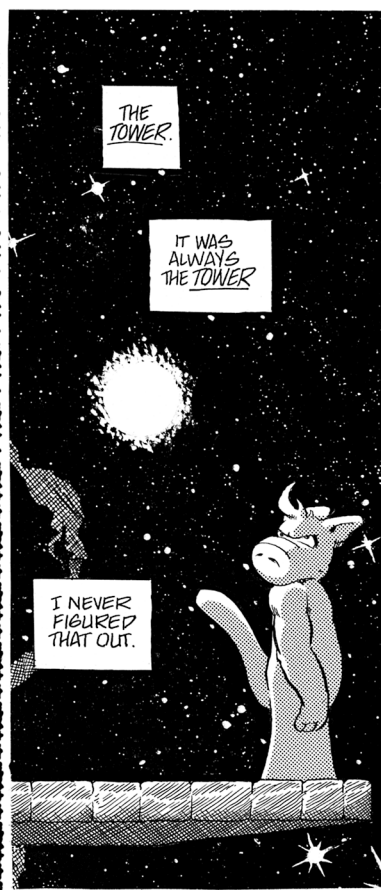


I CAN
FEEL
IT

THIS
TIME.
YES
SIR.



WHAT
EXACTLY
IS THE
FINAL
ASCENSION?



THE
TOWER.

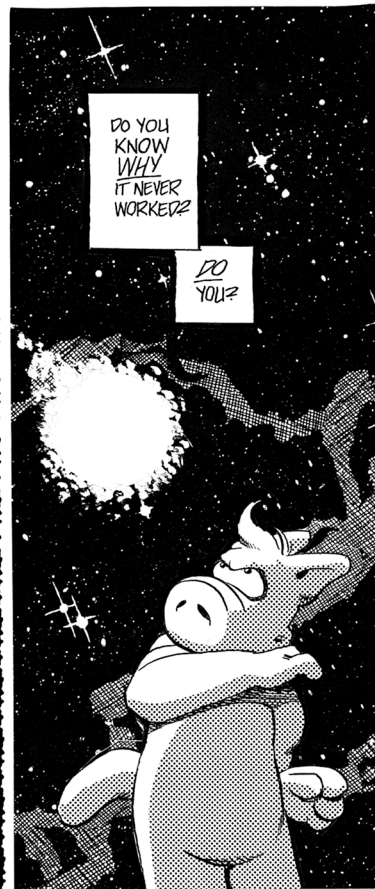
IT WAS
ALWAYS
THE TOWER

I NEVER
FIGURED
THAT OUT.



SEVEN LIVES
I HAD.

SEVEN TRIES
HUNDREDS OF
YEARS APART.



DO YOU
KNOW
WHY
IT NEVER
WORKED?

DO
YOU?



BECAUSE THE
CHILDREN
OF TAKIM
WEREN'T
PURE OF
HEART AND
TAKIM
DESTROYED
THE TOWER THAT
REPRESENTED
THEIR SINS?



NOOOO
NONO
NONO

YOU SOUND
LIKE A
PRIEST.



I WAS
SUPPOSED
TO BE ON
TOP
OF THE
TOWER,
SEE?



I WAS
SUPPOSED
TO MAKE A
SPHERE OF
PUREST GOLD
AND CARRY
IT TO THE
TOP



STUPID
STUPID
STUPID.



EVERY DAMN TIME
I'D BE BESIDE THE
TOWER, UNDER THE
TOWER, ACROSS THE
RIVER FROM THE
TOWER.



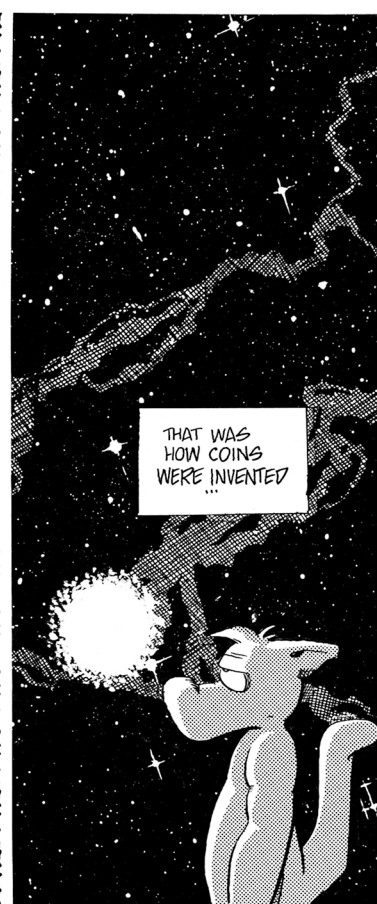
LAST TIME I HAD
TWENTY THOUSAND
SLAVES HOLLOW IT
OUT AND I WAS
IN THE TOWER...



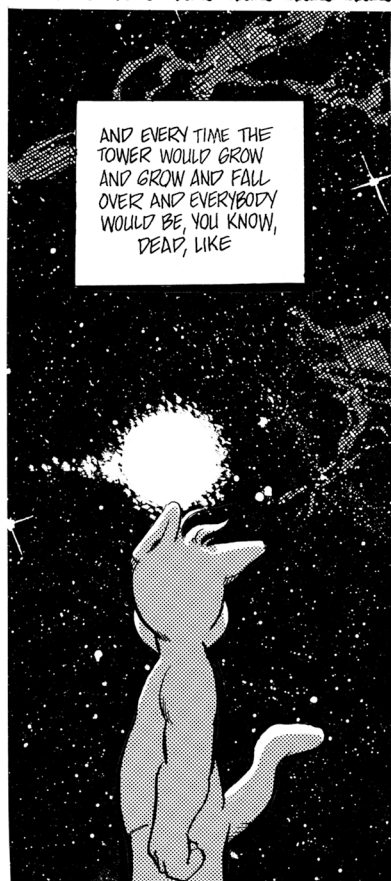
I MADE
A SPHERE
TWENTY
METRES
AROUND



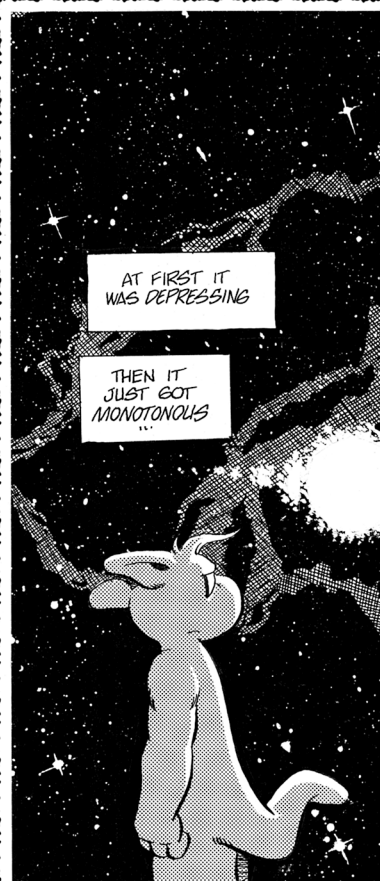
ANOTHER TIME I
MADE A HUNDRED
THOUSAND LITTLE
SPHERES, POUNDED
THEM FLAT AND
STAMPED MY
PICTURE ON THEM
...



THAT WAS
HOW COINS
WERE INVENTED
...

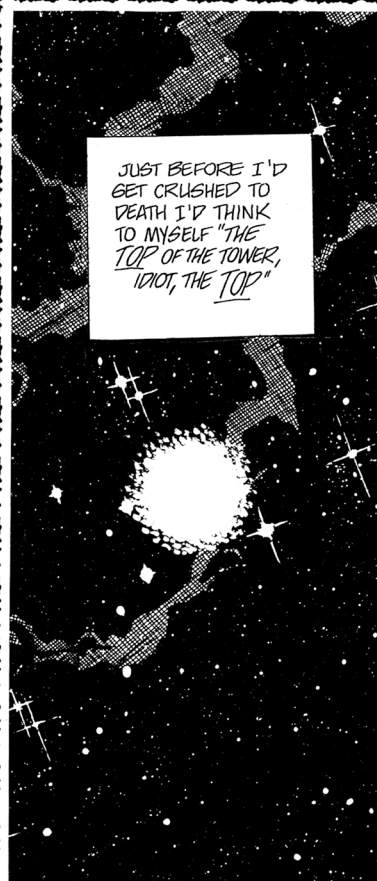


AND EVERY TIME THE
TOWER WOULD GROW
AND GROW AND FALL
OVER AND EVERYBODY
WOULD BE, YOU KNOW,
DEAD, LIKE

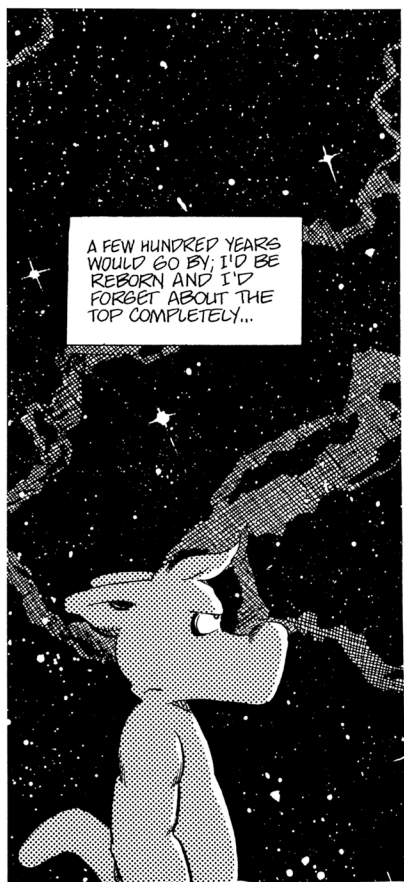


AT FIRST IT
WAS DEPRESSING

THEN IT
JUST GOT
MONOTONOUS
...



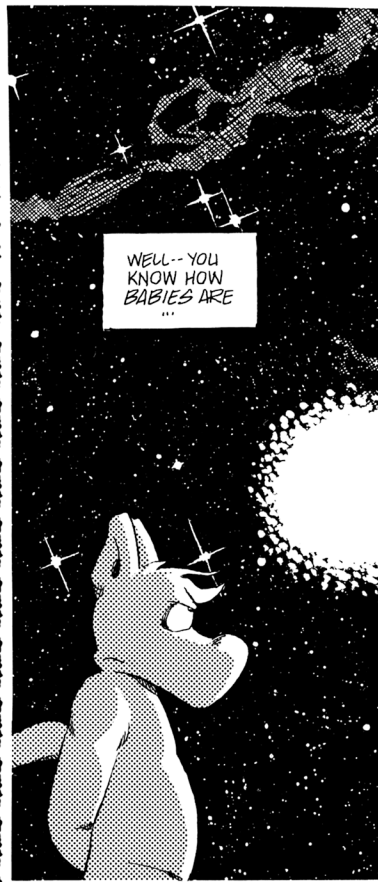
JUST BEFORE I'D
GET CRUSHED TO
DEATH I'D THINK
TO MYSELF "THE
TOP OF THE TOWER,
IDiot, THE TOP"



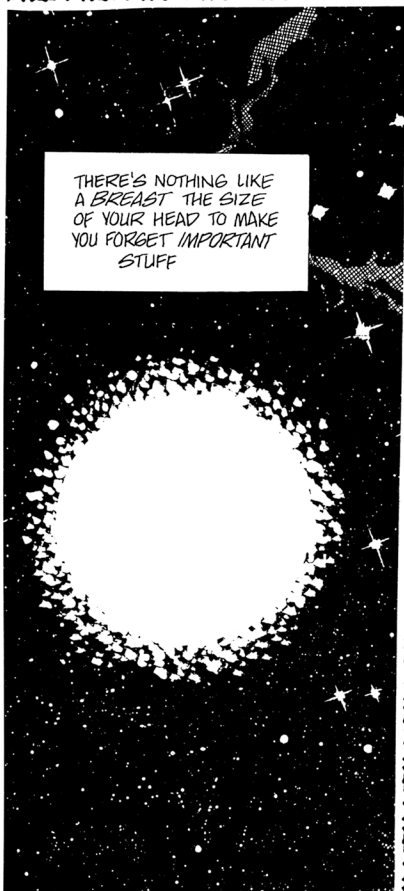
A FEW HUNDRED YEARS
WOULD GO BY; I'D BE
REBORN AND I'D
FORGET ABOUT THE
TOP COMPLETELY...



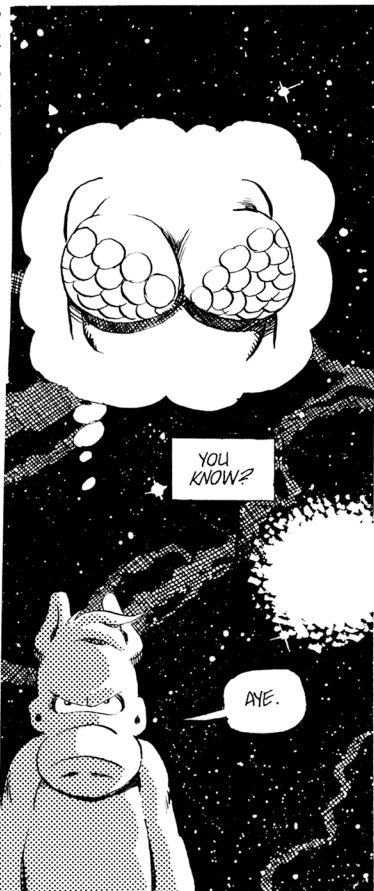
AYE?



WELL-- YOU
KNOW HOW
BABIES ARE
...



THERE'S NOTHING LIKE
A BREAST THE SIZE
OF YOUR HEAD TO MAKE
YOU FORGET IMPORTANT
STUFF

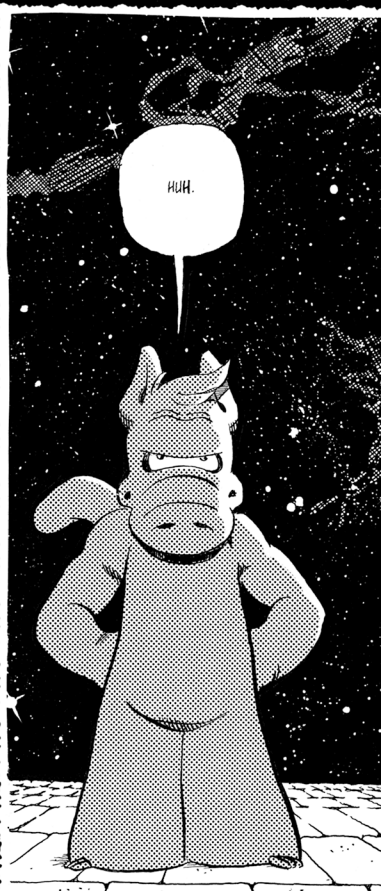
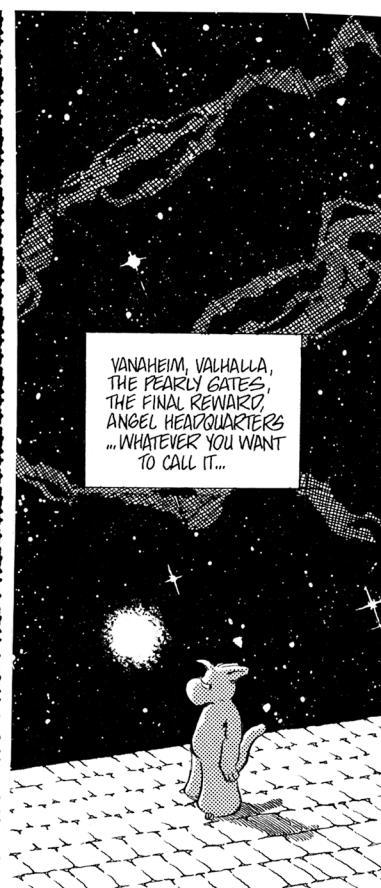


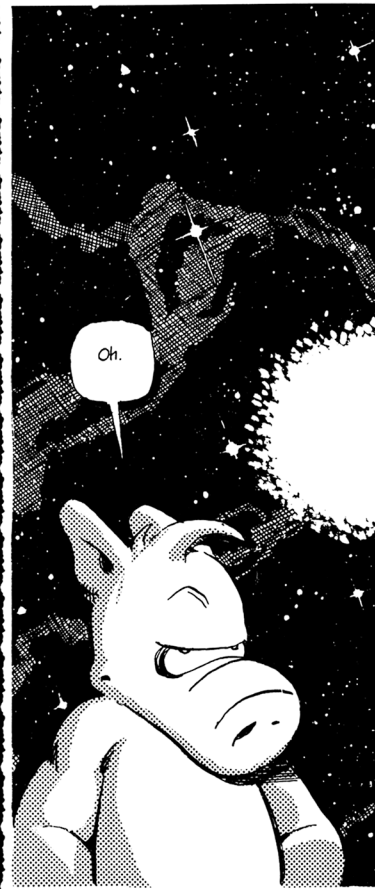
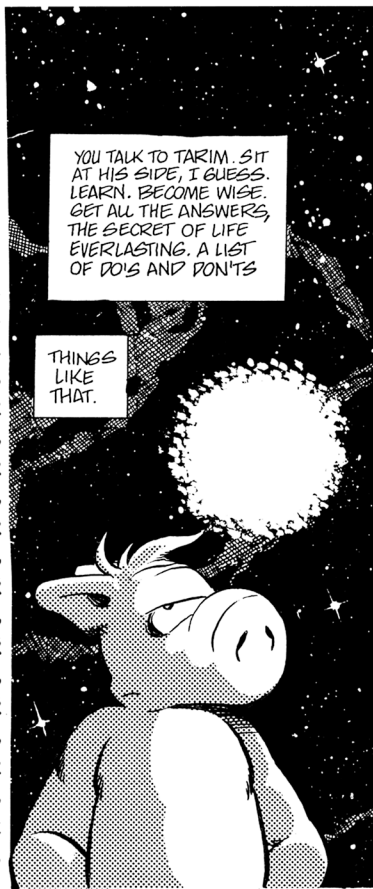
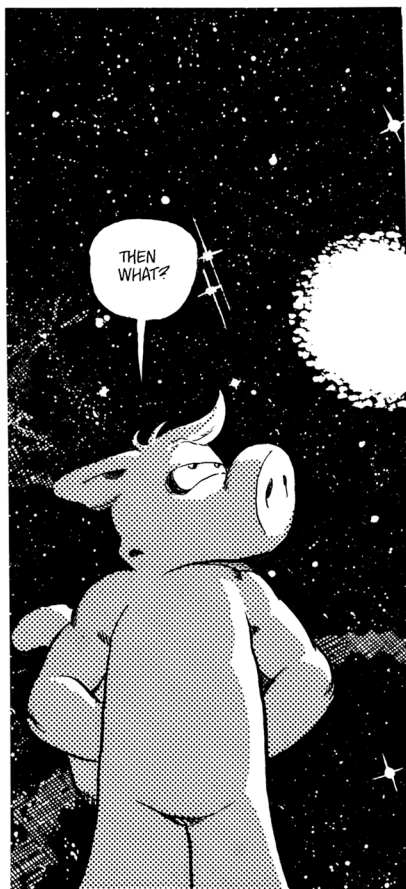
YOU
KNOW?

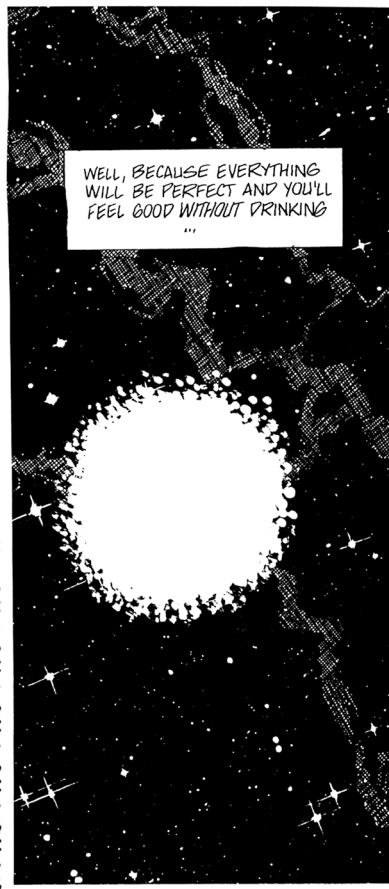
AYE.

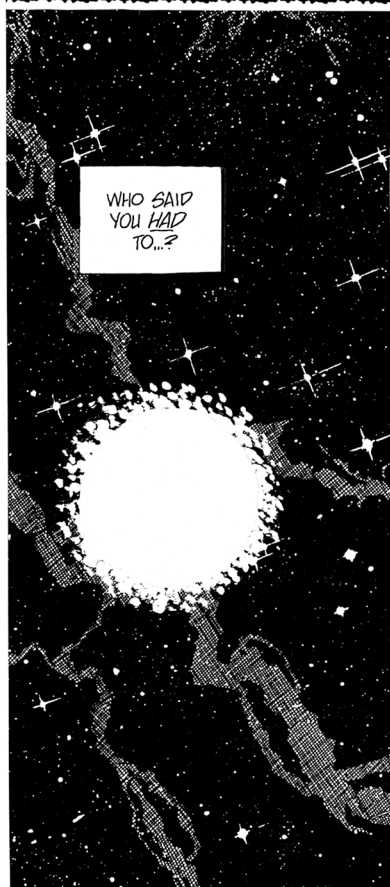
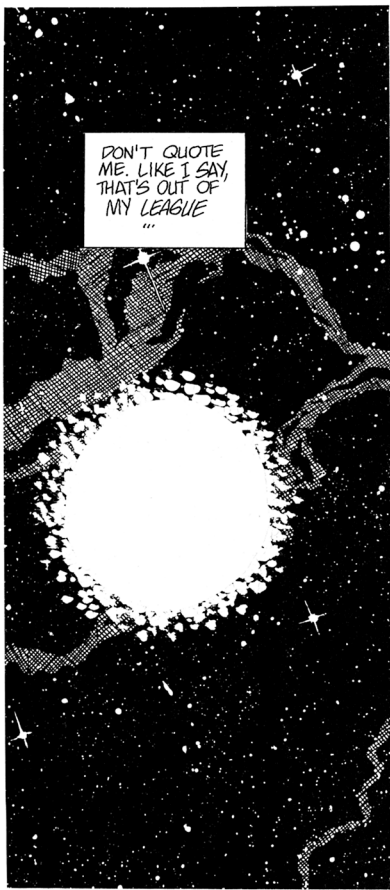


YOU STILL HAVEN'T
TOLD CEREBUS
WHAT THE FINAL
ASCENSION IS



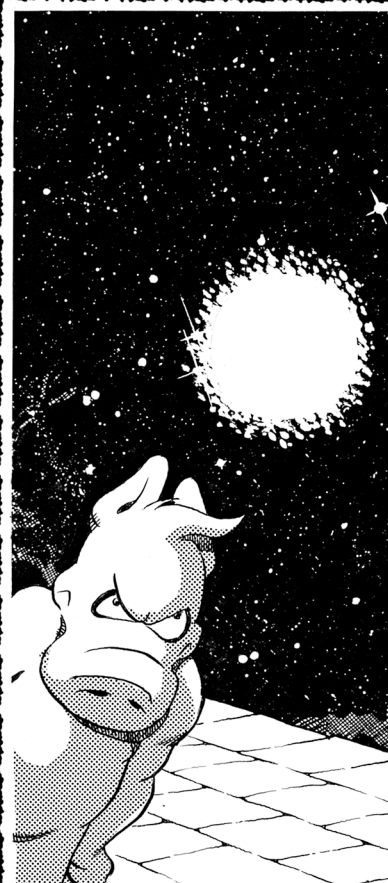
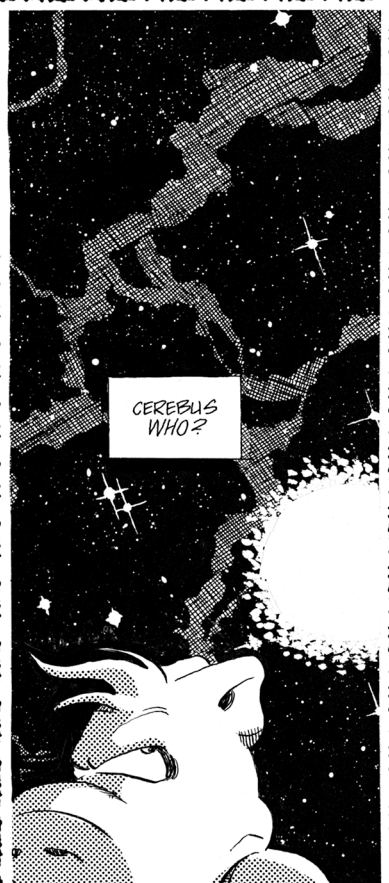








GET SOMEONE ELSE.
ANYBODY WITH A GOLD
SPHERE CAN DO IT....
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO
IS POINT THEM TO
THE TOP OF THE
TOWER AND STAND
ON THE DOCK, WAVING
YOUR HANKIE
...



CEREBUS THE POPE!
CEREBUS THE PRIME
MINISTER! CEREBUS
THE ONE WHO
KILLED THE FALSE
TARIM!!



WHO
ELSE?!?

WHO?!?



WELL- ANYBODY!
THAT'S WHAT
I'M SAYING...

IT'S VERY
DEMOCRATIC



VERY
WHAT?



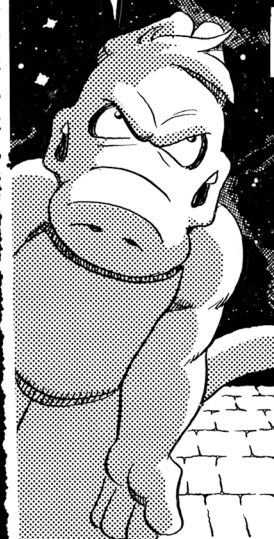
REPUBLICAN.



YOU MEAN ANYBODY?
EVEN THE PEASANTS
AND LIVESTOCK?!?

THAT CRAP
ASTORIA BELIEVES
IN?

YOU GOT
IT, ACE.





THAT'S **CRAZY!**
TARIM DOESN'T
WANT **JUST**
ANYBODY
FOR HIS **REDEEMER**

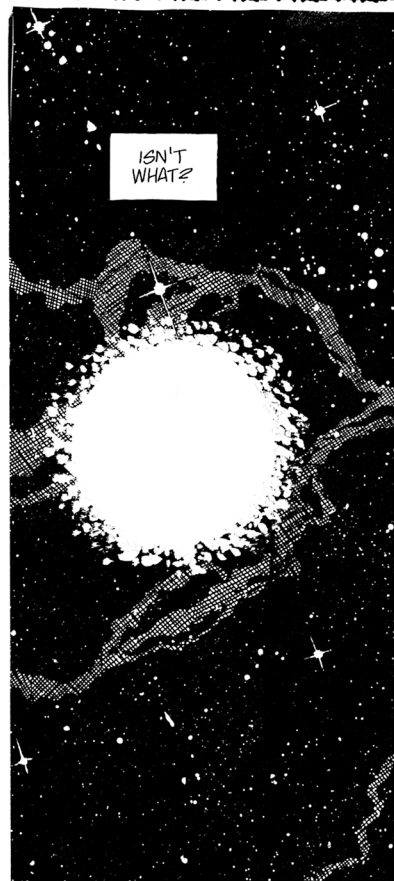


WHY NOT? I MEAN,
IF YOU'RE TARIM,
ANYBODY IS "JUST
ANYBODY"

EVERYBODY'S
A NOBODY.



EVERYBODY
MAY BE NOBODY
AND ANYBODY
MAY BE "JUST
ANYBODY", BUT
CEREBUS ISN'T!!



ISN'T
WHAT?



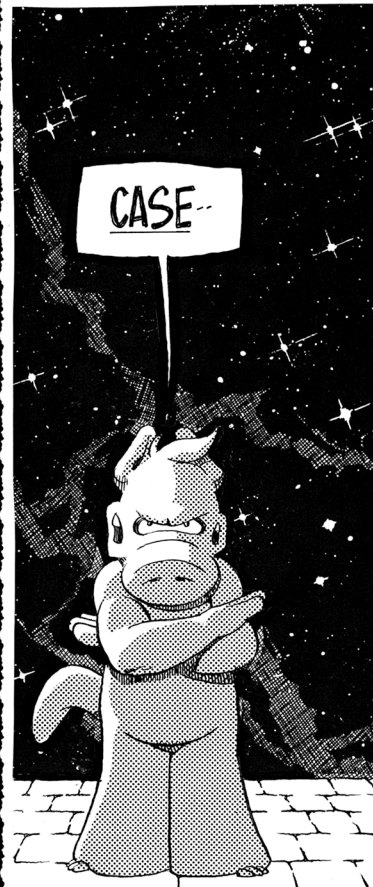
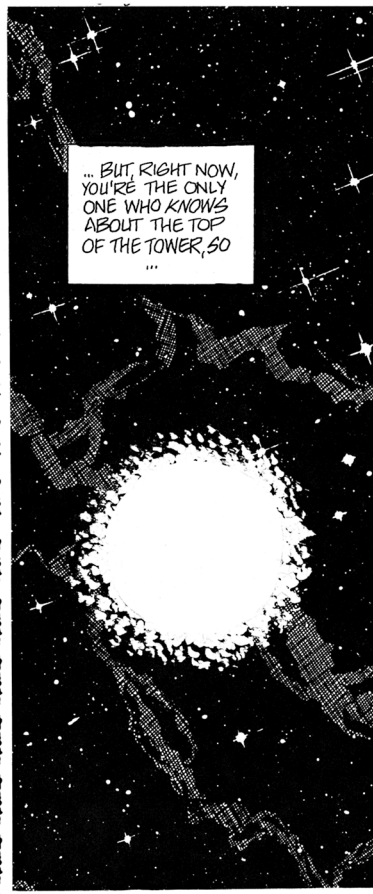
EVERYBODY!!

NOBODY!!

ANYBODY!!



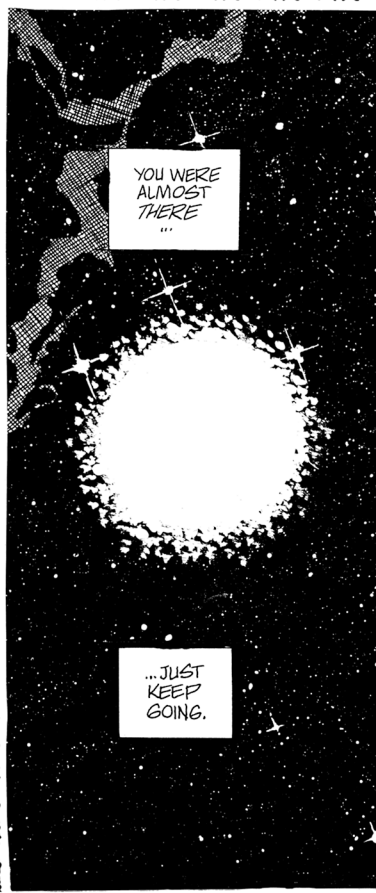
CEREBUS IS
CEREBUS! CEREBUS
IS MOST HOLY--
CEREBUS IS
THE GREAT
CEREBUS!





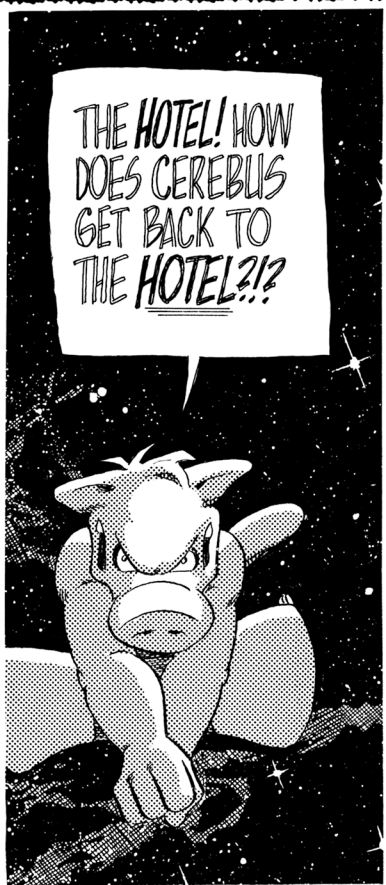
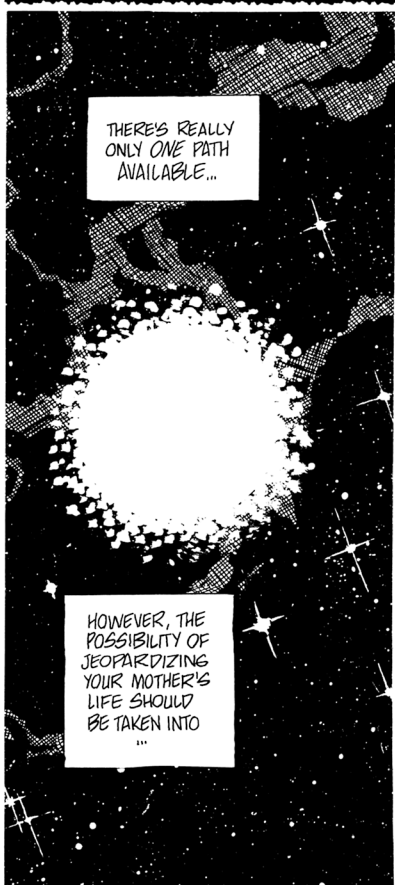


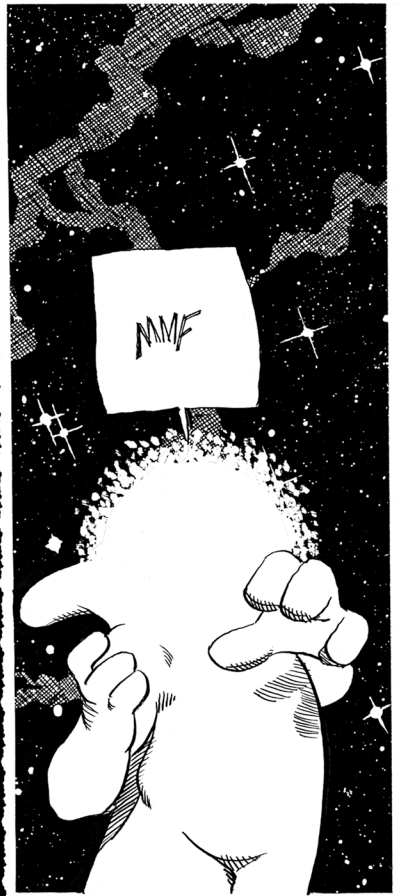
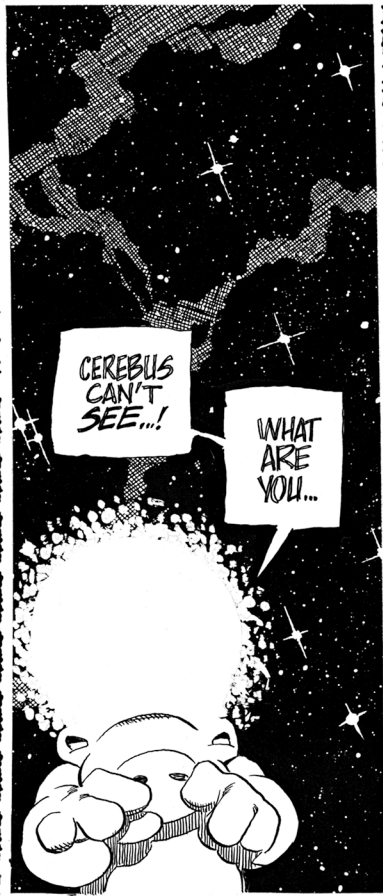
HOW DOES
CEREBUS
GET OFF
OF HERE?

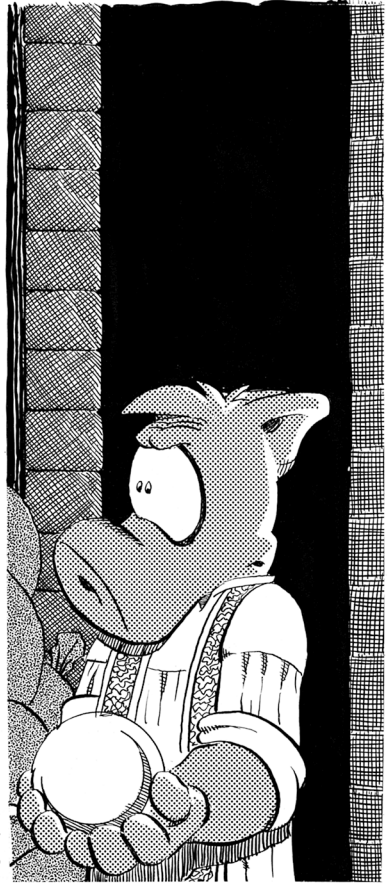
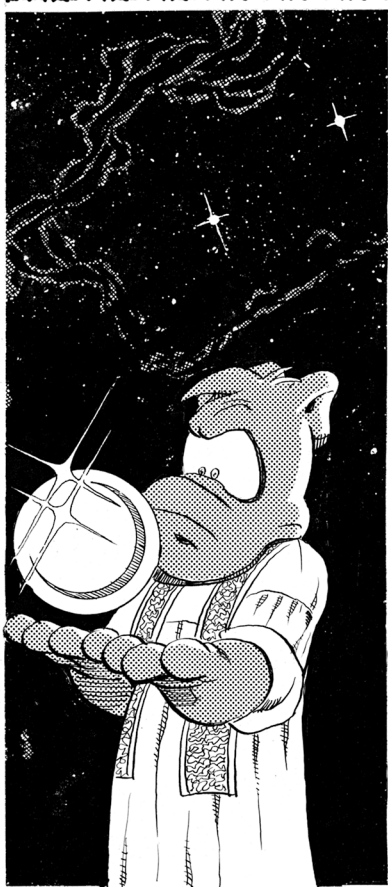
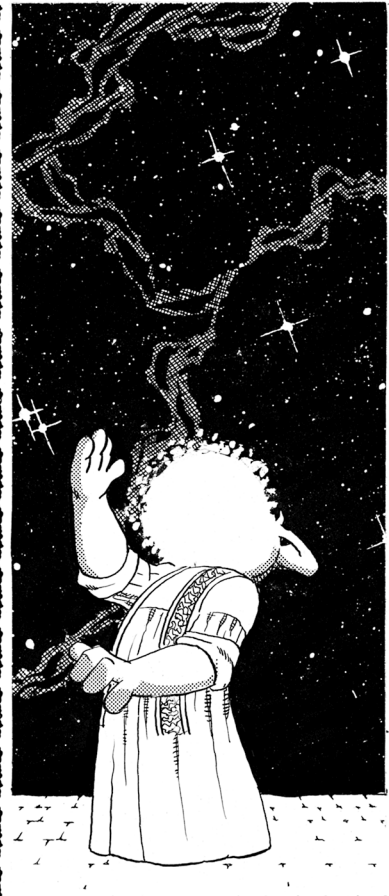


YOU WERE
ALMOST
THERE

...JUST
KEEP
GOING.





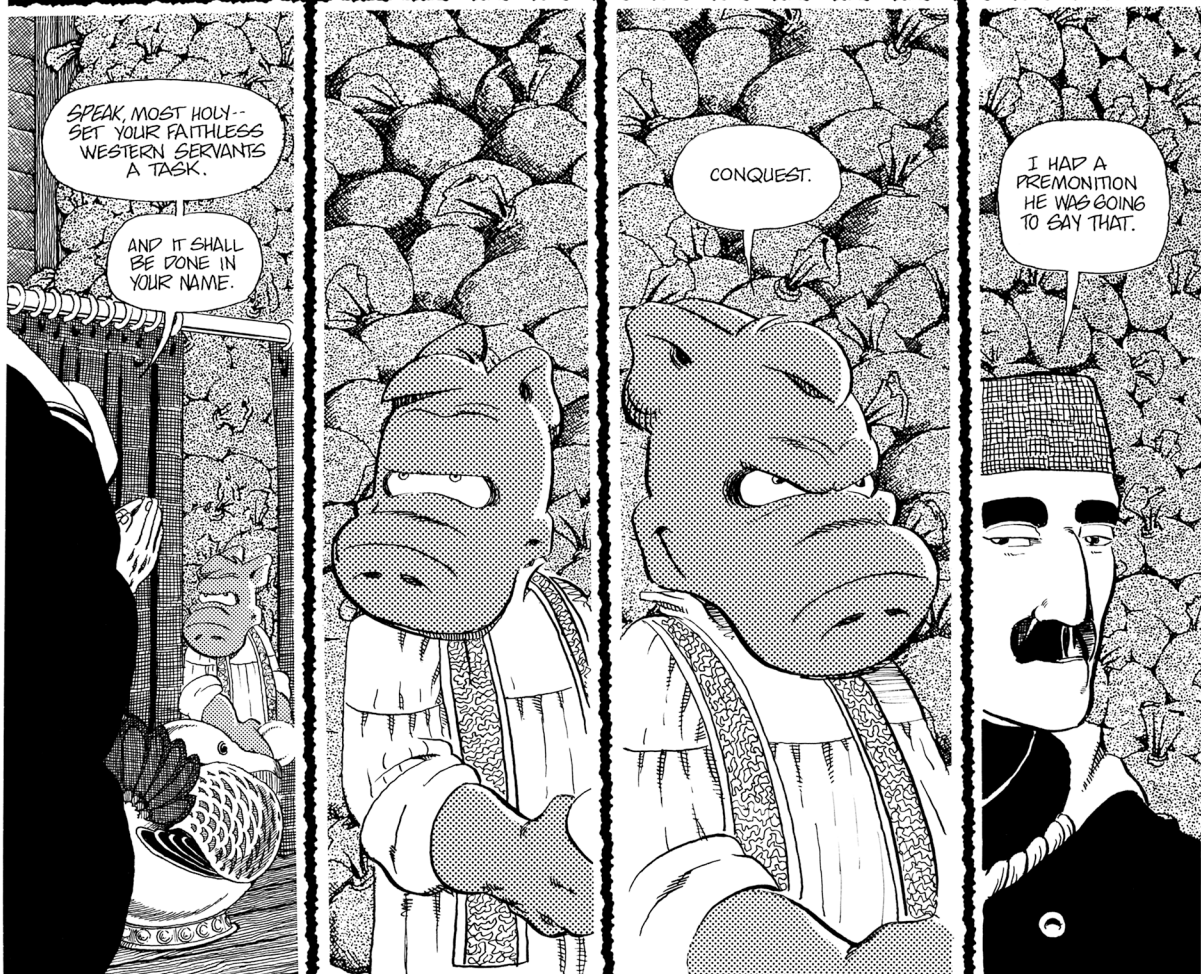
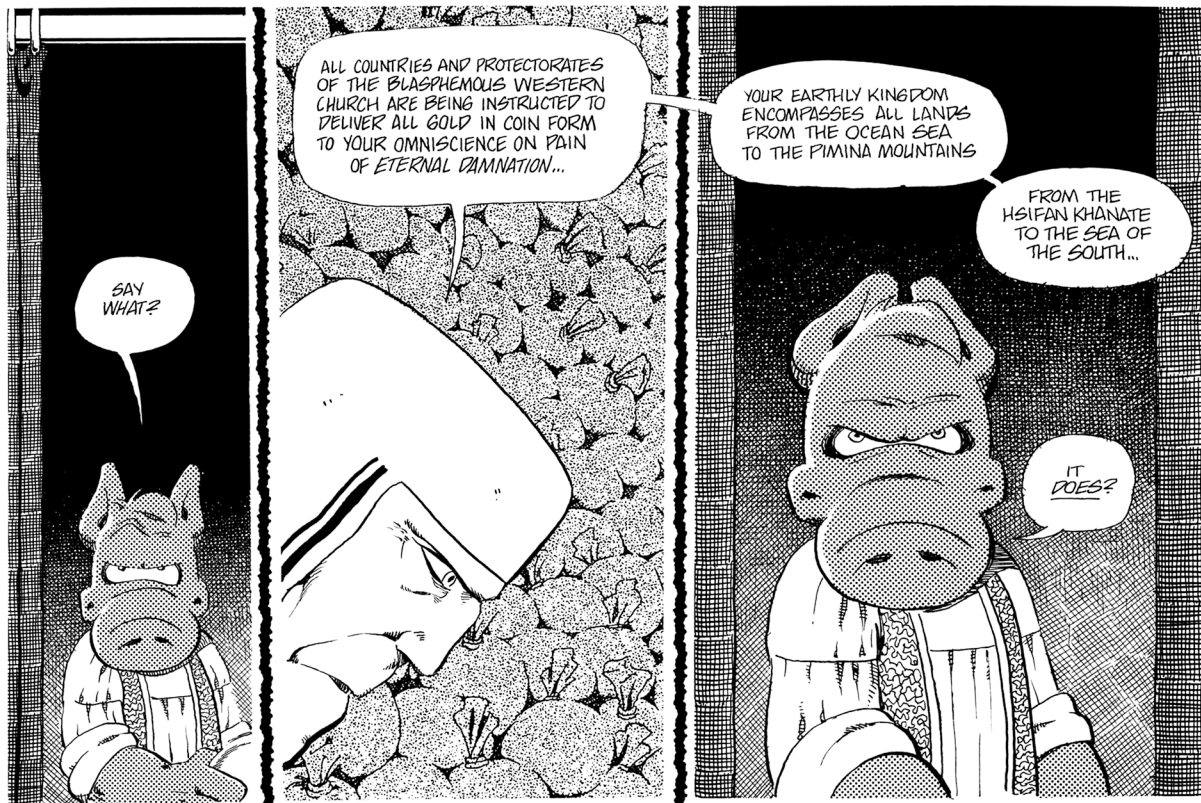


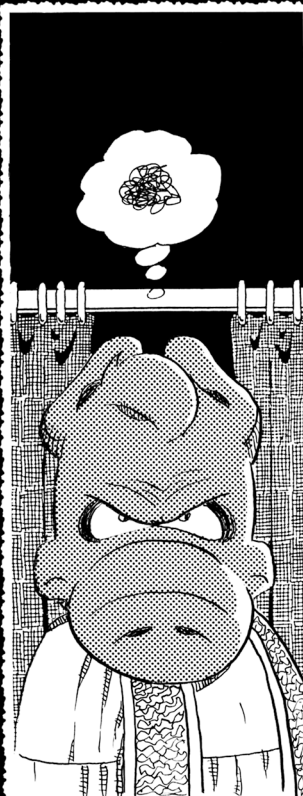
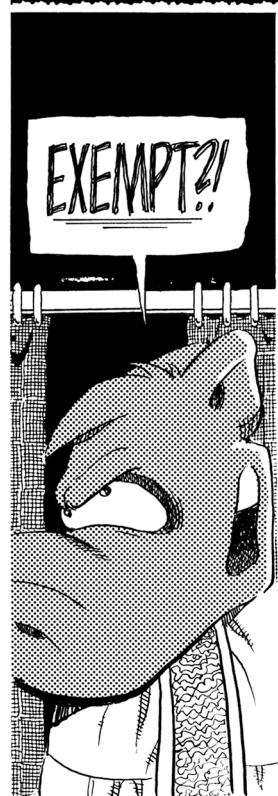
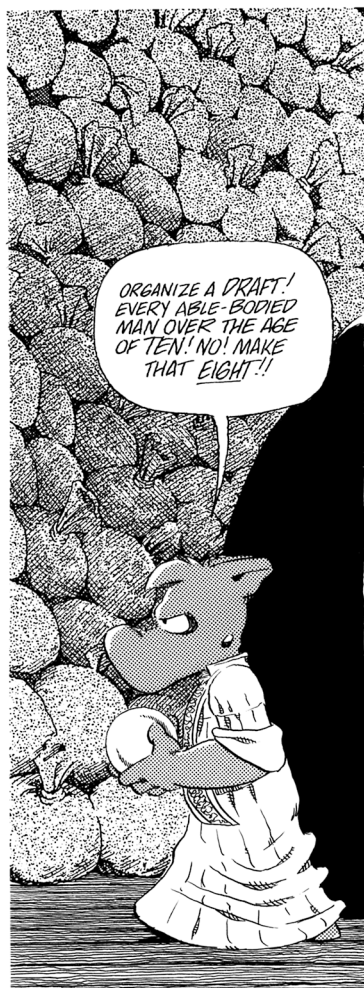


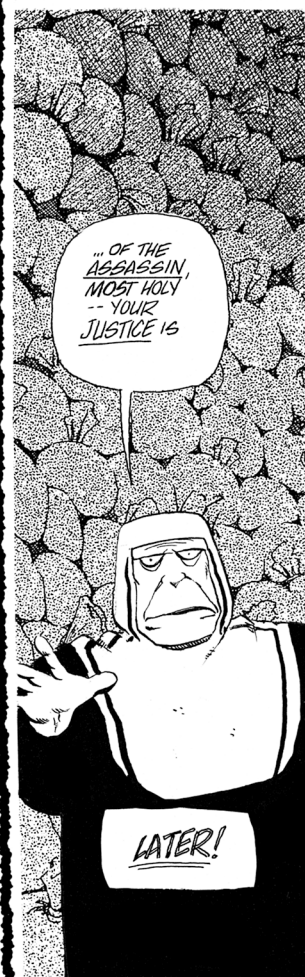
NEXT:
AUDACITY
WITH
TENURE

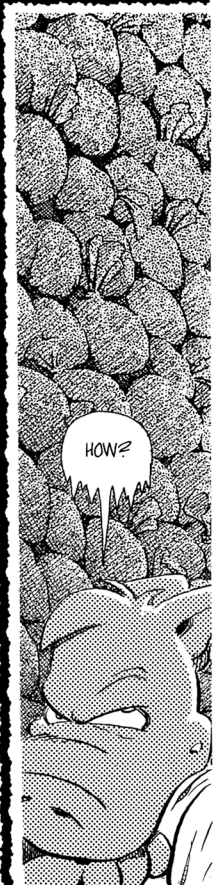
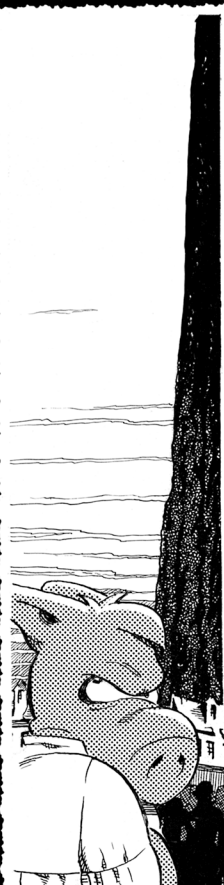
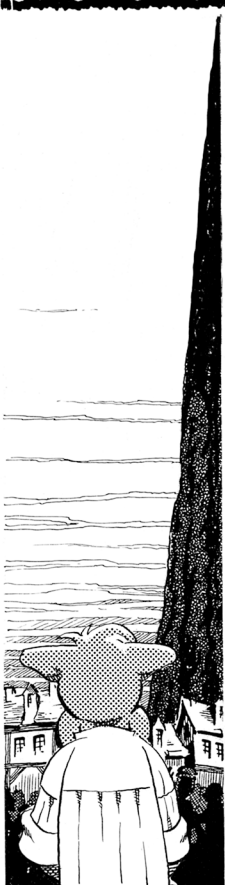


audacious
teracity
teracious
audacity











GLAD YOU
ASKED, MOY
FRIEND
...

Set'..
gimme da
sketch
...



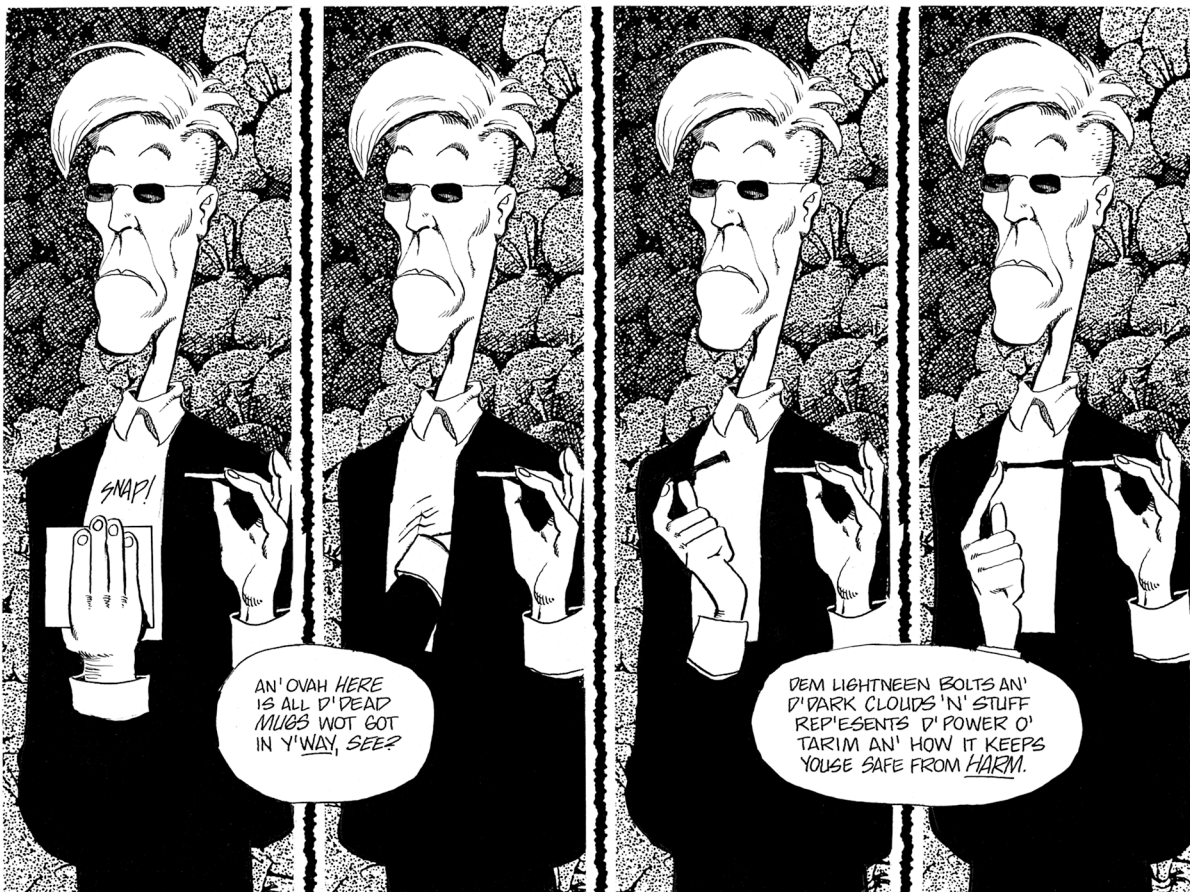
WOW.

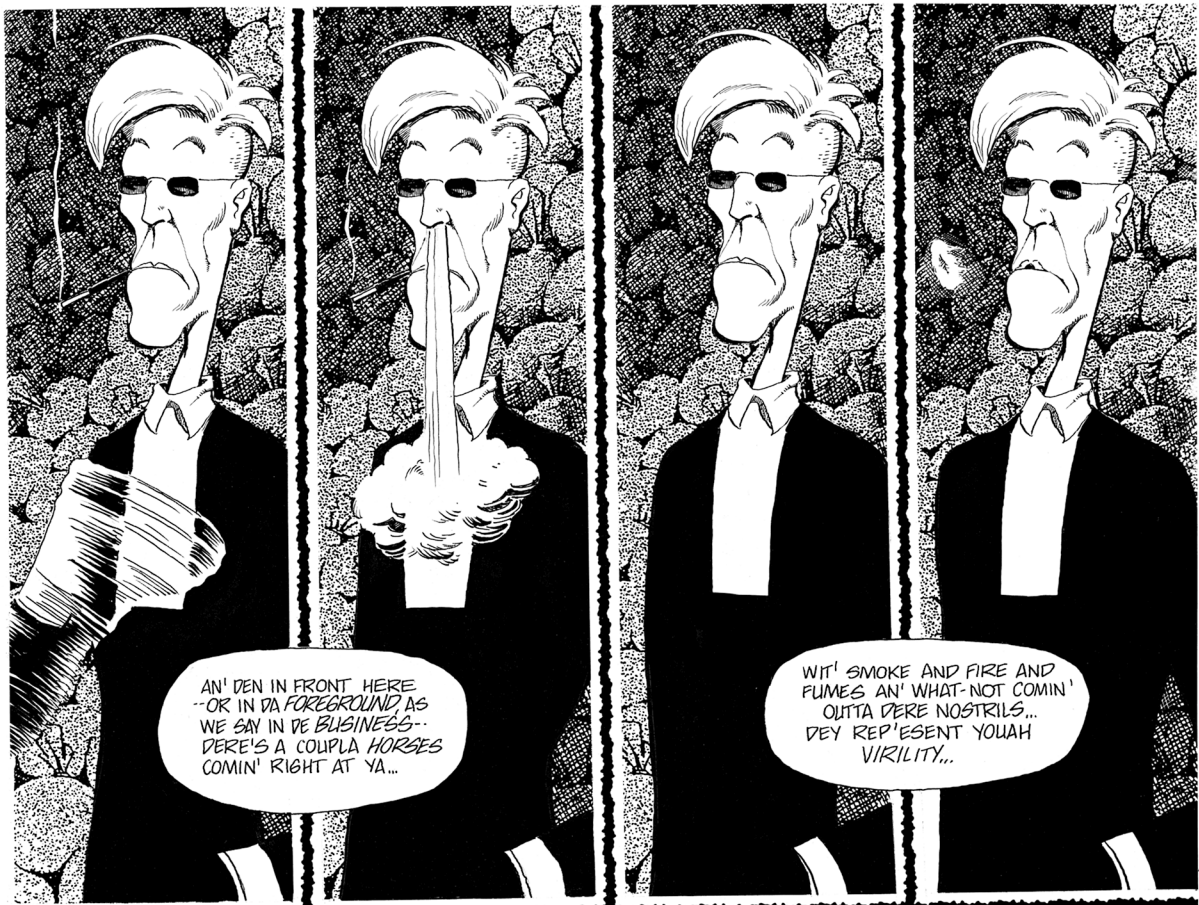


YOU SAID A MOUT'FUL
DERE, BRUDDER...SEE
Y'RIGHT HAND HERE?
YOU IS HOLDIN' D'SOOWARD
O'RIGHTHOUSNESS
...



AN' IN YOUAH LEFT HAND
OVAH HERE, YOU IS HOLDIN'
D'WHIP OF Y'MOICY AN'
Y'BENEVOLENCE





AN' DEN IN FRONT HERE
--OR IN DA FOREGROUND, AS
WE SAY IN DE BUSINESS--
DERE'S A COUPLA HORSES
COMIN' RIGHT AT YA...

WIT' SMOKE AND FIRE AND
FUMES AN' WHAT-NOT COMIN'
OUTTA DERE NOSTRILS...
DEY REP'ESNT YOWAH
VIRILITY...



LIKEWISE WIT'
D'ENORMOLIS
BULGE IN Y'
PANTS HERE



AN'
'EMEMBER

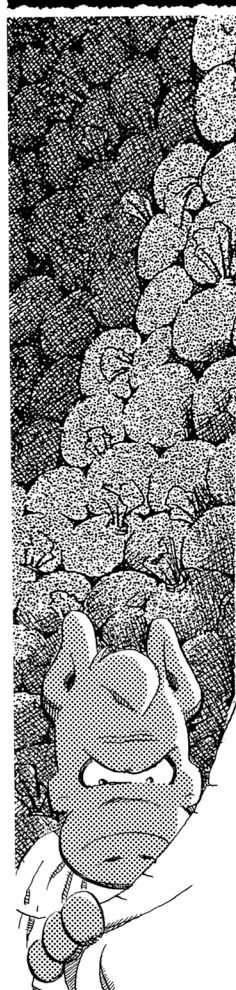
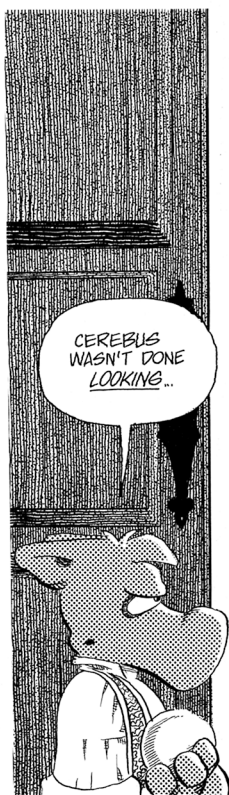
DIS IS
ONLY A
SKETCH

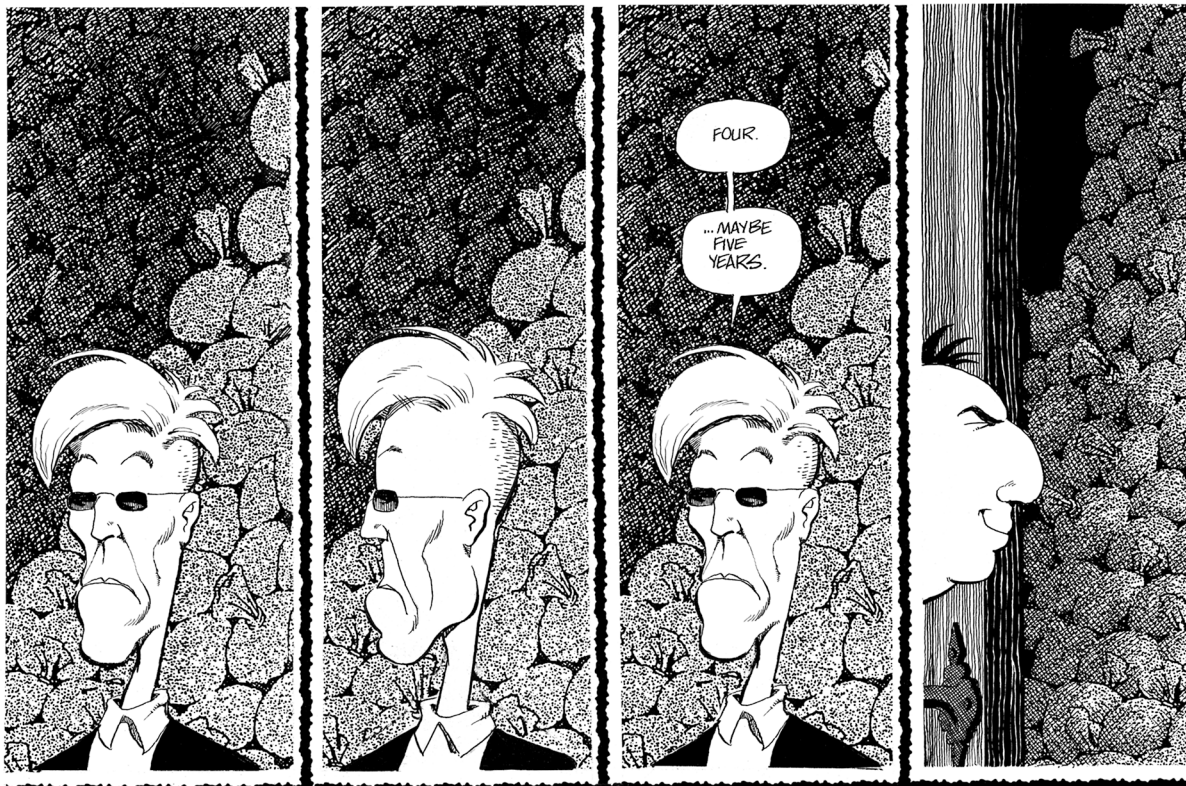
SET'S GONNA
DO A PAINEEN
OF IT...

SHUCK
SHUCK
SHUCK
SHUCK

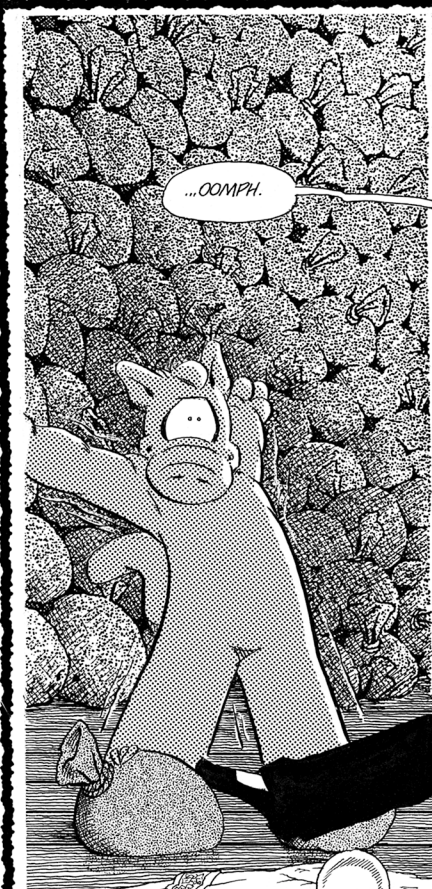
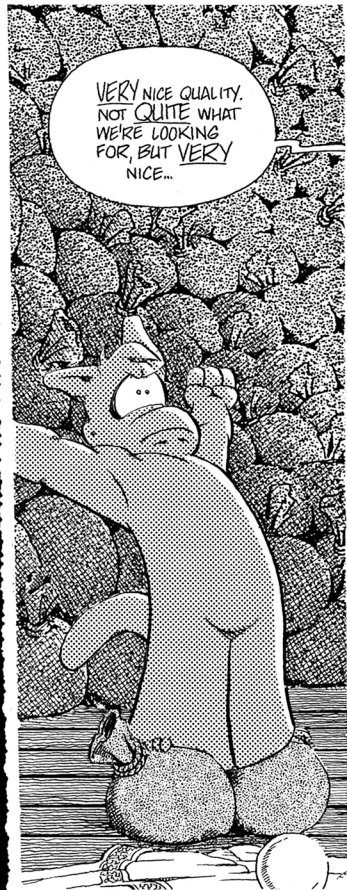
YEAH.

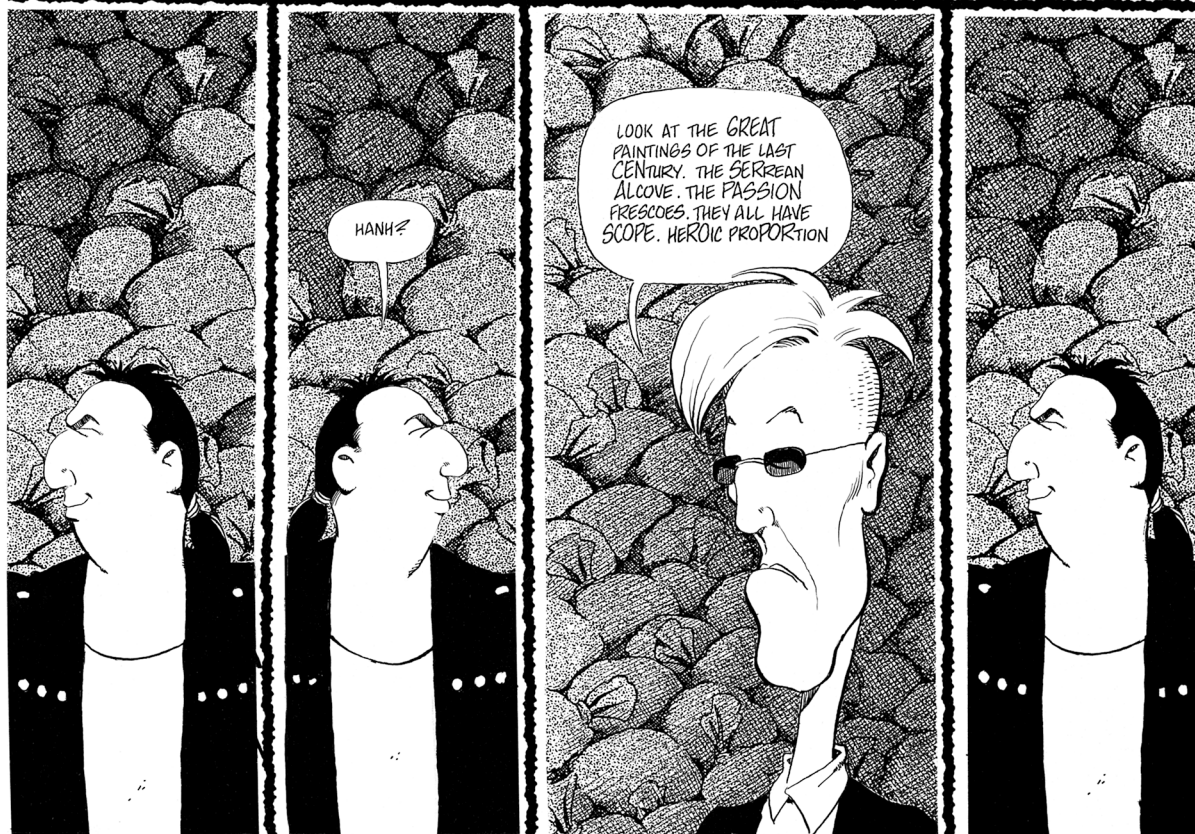
A BIG
PAINEEN

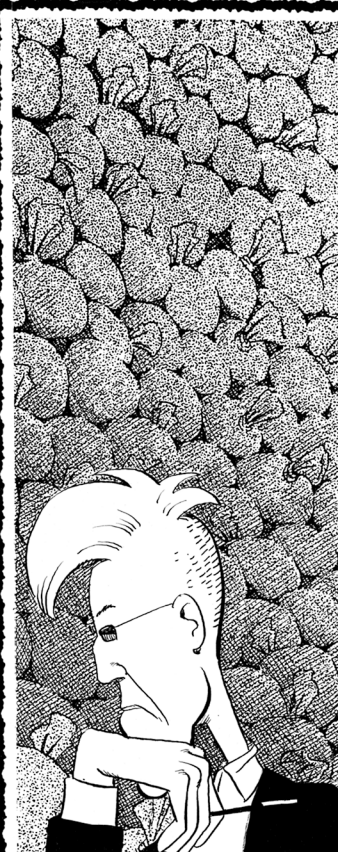
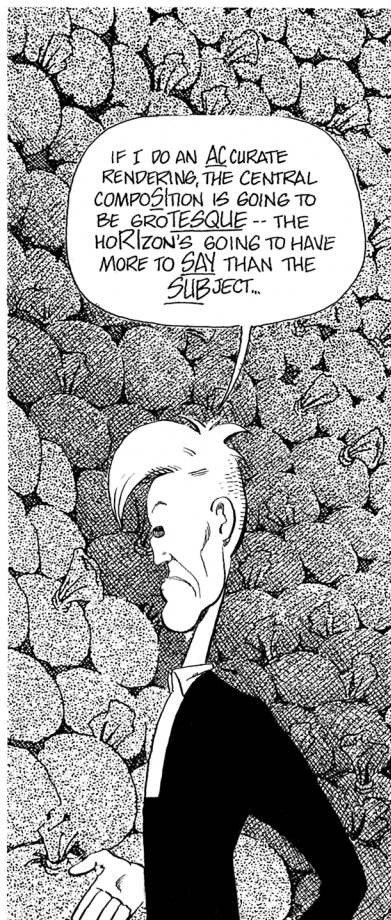


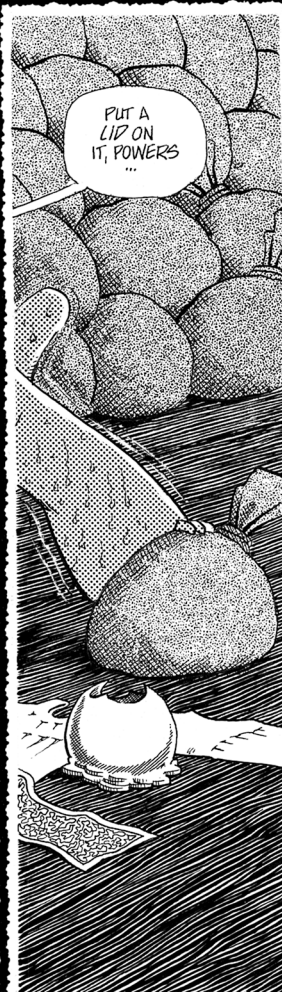
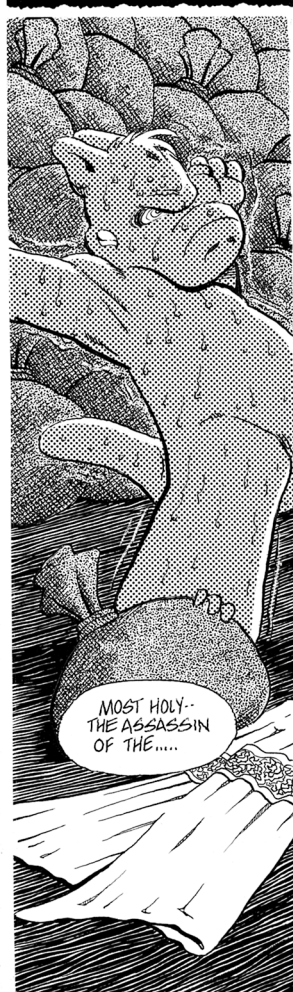
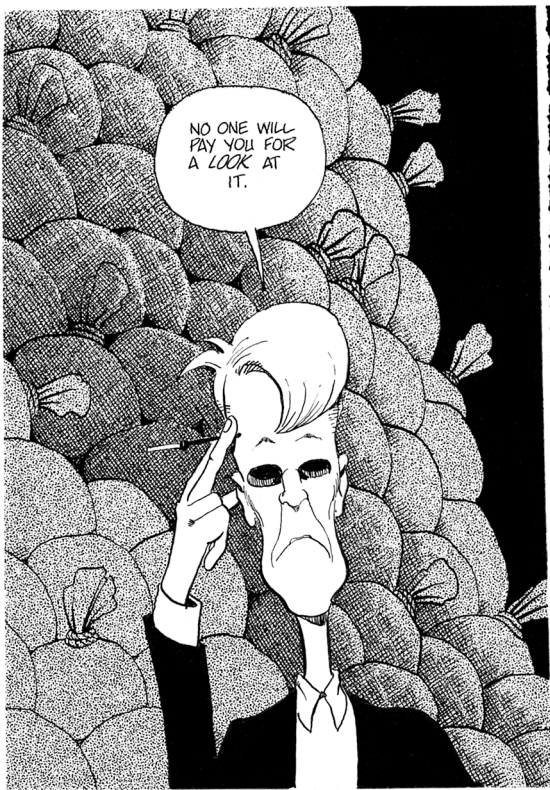














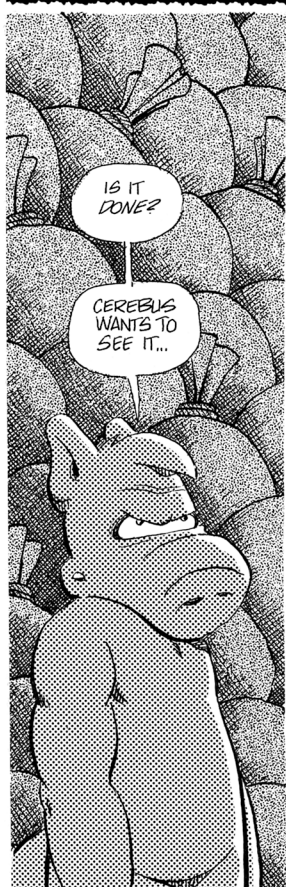
GET YOUAH STUFF
T'GEDDUH... I'LL
SEE IF I C'N GET
US OUTTA DIS
FRIASCO
...



LISSEN! T'ANKS VERY MUCH.
I T'INK WE GOT EVDYING WE
NEED, SO WE'LL BE SHOVIN'
OFF...

YOU BIN
SWELL.

I MEAN DAT
SINCCELY...



IS IT
DONE?

CEREBUS
WANTS TO
SEE IT...



IS
WHAT
DONE?

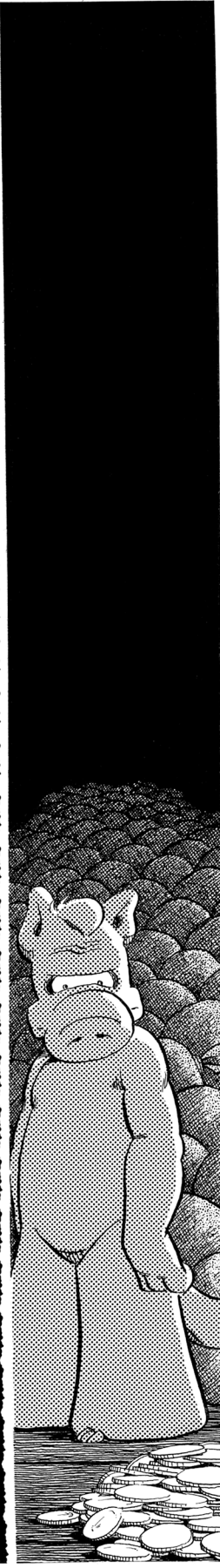


THE
PAINTING!



THE PAINEEN! WELL
YES 'N' NO. SEE--
SET'S USIN' DIS
HERE NEW KIN'A
PAINT. YEAH, DAT'S
IT. A NEW KIN'A
PAINT...

AN'...uh...
DIS PAINT...
IT...uh...





LOOK WHAT
THEY DID
TO CEREBLIS'
GOLD SPHERE!



MOST
HOLY!



DESPITE THE PERIL
TO MY IMMORTAL
SOUL I DO FEEL
THAT I MUST WARN
YOU THAT IF YOU DO
NOT PASS JUDGEMENT
AND SENTENCE UPON
THE ASSASSIN OF THE
LION OF SERREA IN
THE NEXT DAY OR SO
THAT THERE IS NO
GUARANTEE THAT
THE LEGIONS WILL
NOT STRIKE INTO
THE HEART OF IEST
AND DESTROY YOU.
THE PRISONER POSES
THE GREATEST OF ALL
POSSIBLE THREATS
TO YOUR BELIEFS
AND THE SECURITY
OF ALL THAT MEN OF
GOOD FAITH HOLD
SACRED..

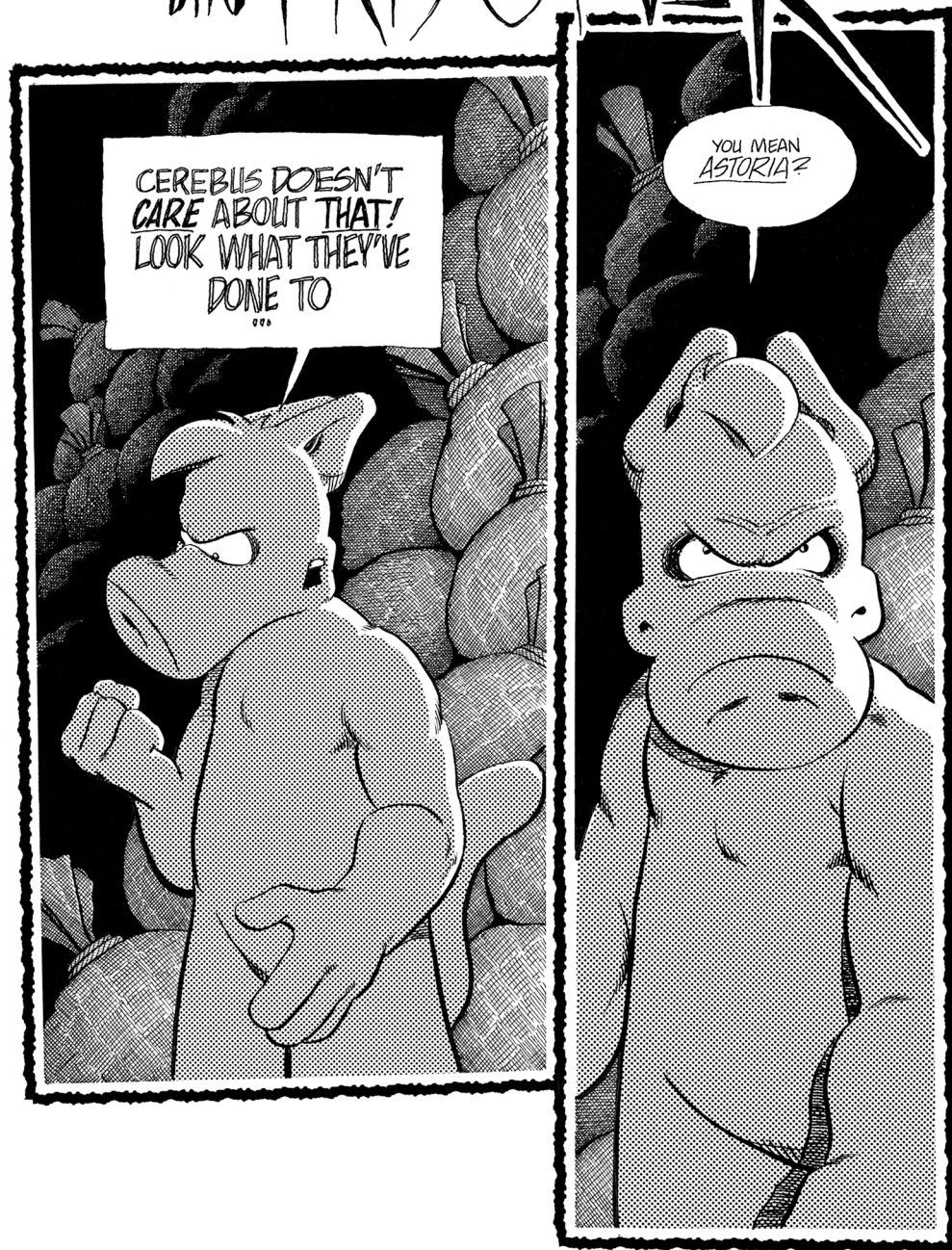


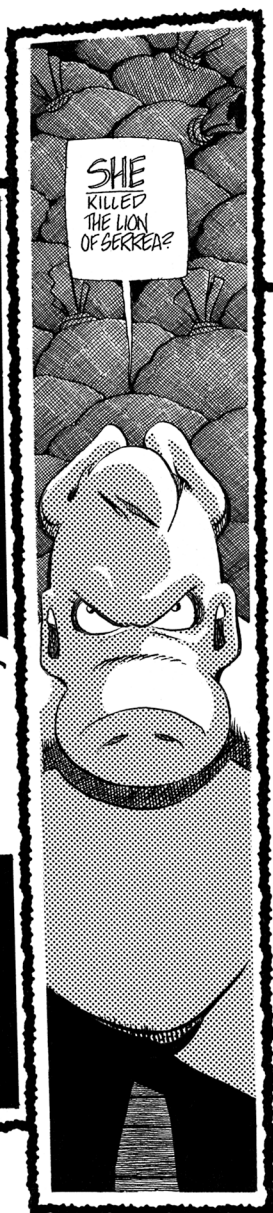
SOUNDS
LIKE MY
EX-WIFE
...



next: LIKE OLD TIMES

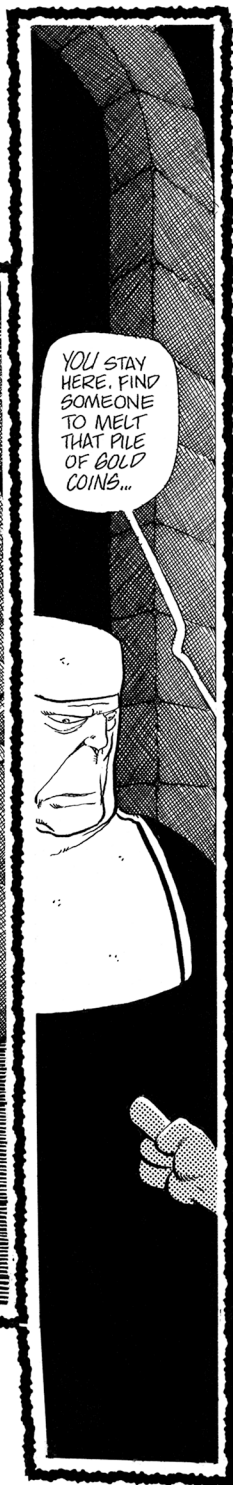
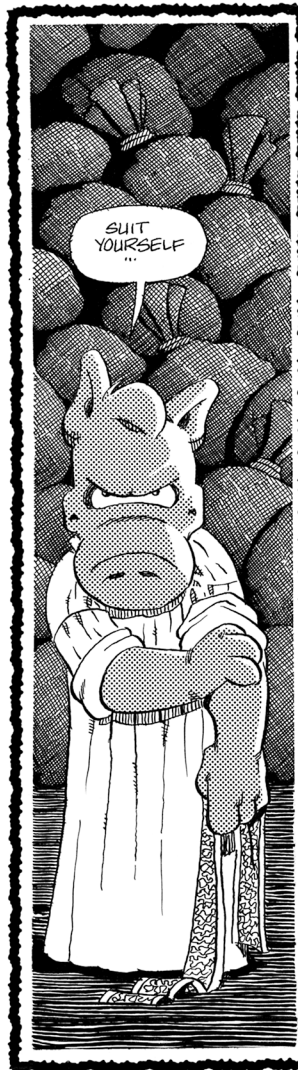
the PRISONER

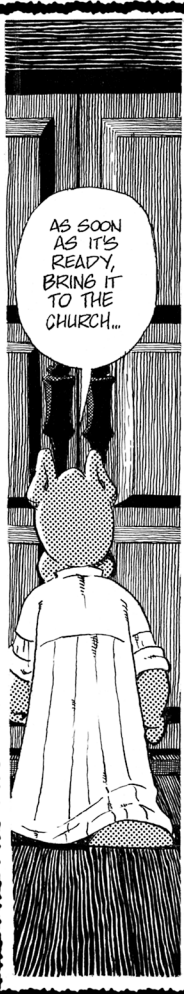
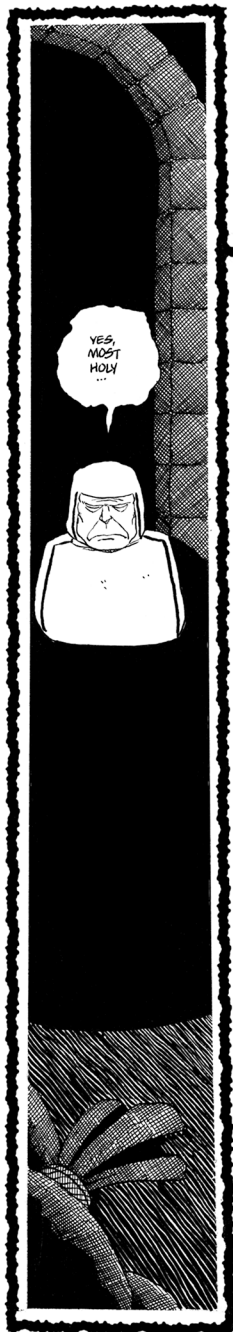


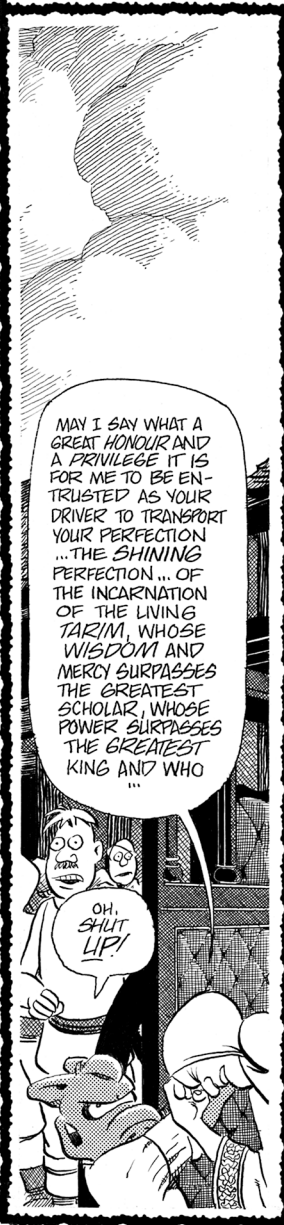
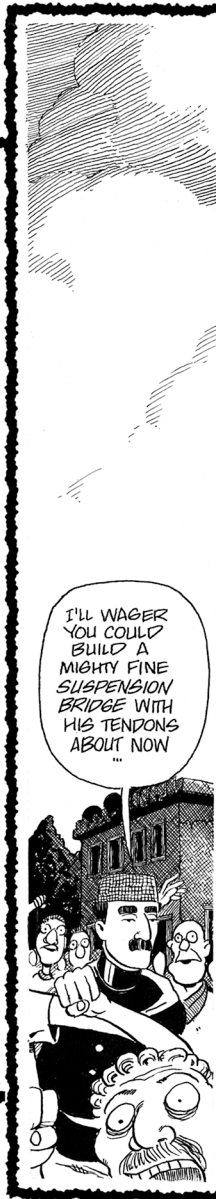




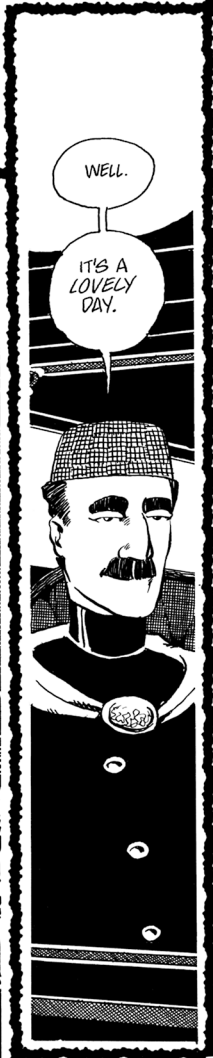




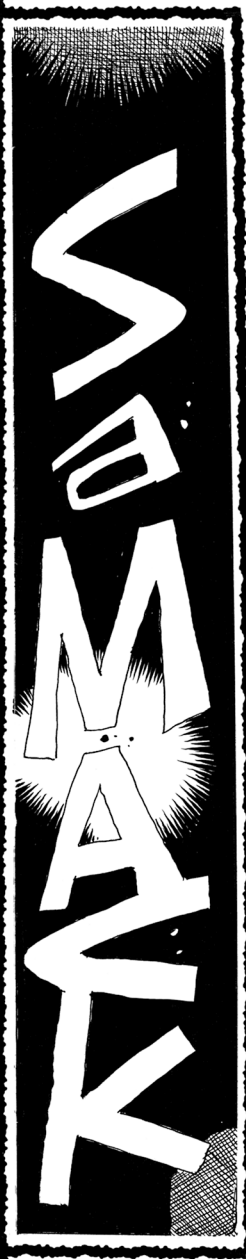


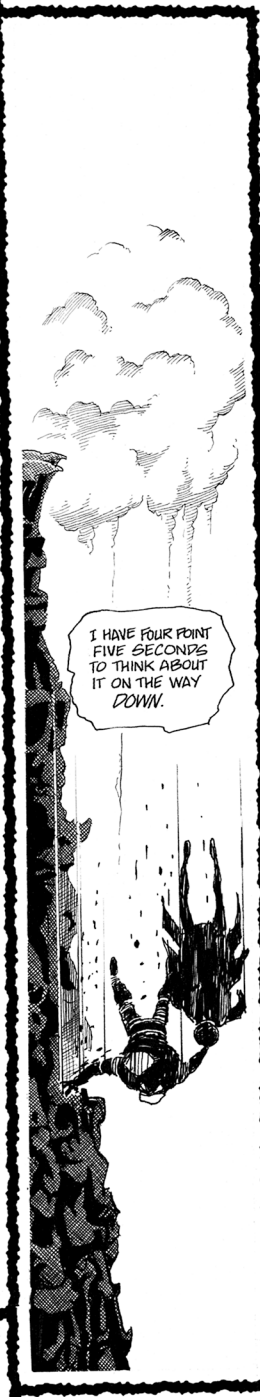




















CLIK
CLAK

KEEP AN EYE ON
THIS MAN, HE'S
A TROUBLE-
MAKER.

YES,
YOUR
PERFECTION

WAIT! WHAT
ABOUT THE
ALIMONY
PAYM...

SLAM

TAP
TIP
TAP
TIP
TAP
TIP
TAP
TIP

THERE SHE
IS, YOUR
PERFECTION

AYE.





NOW
GET
LOST.



BUT...YOUR
PERFECTION
...

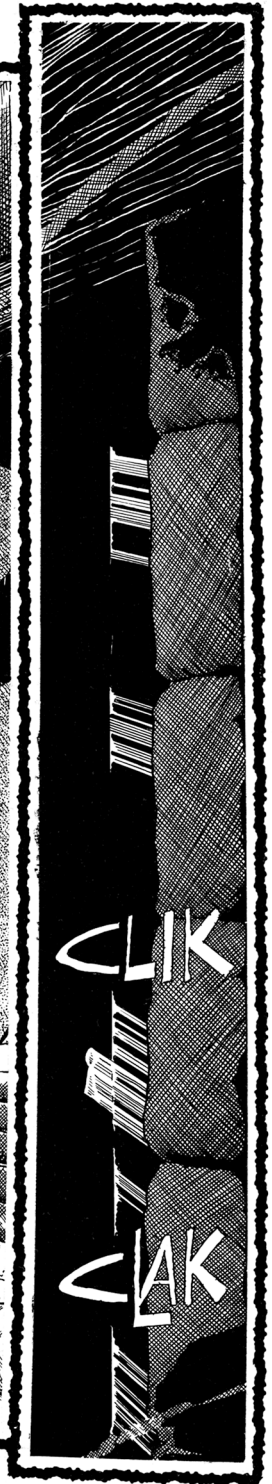
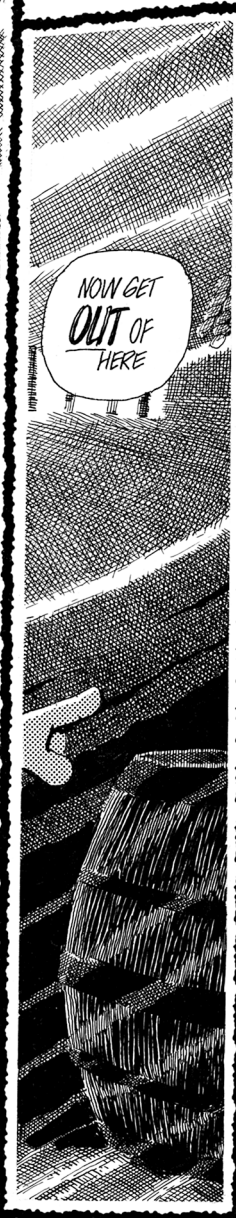
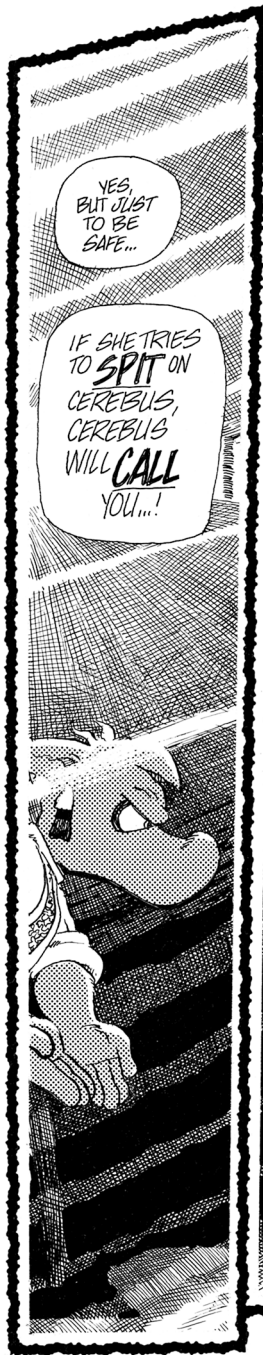


...SHE'S
DANGEROUS.



DANGEROUS?

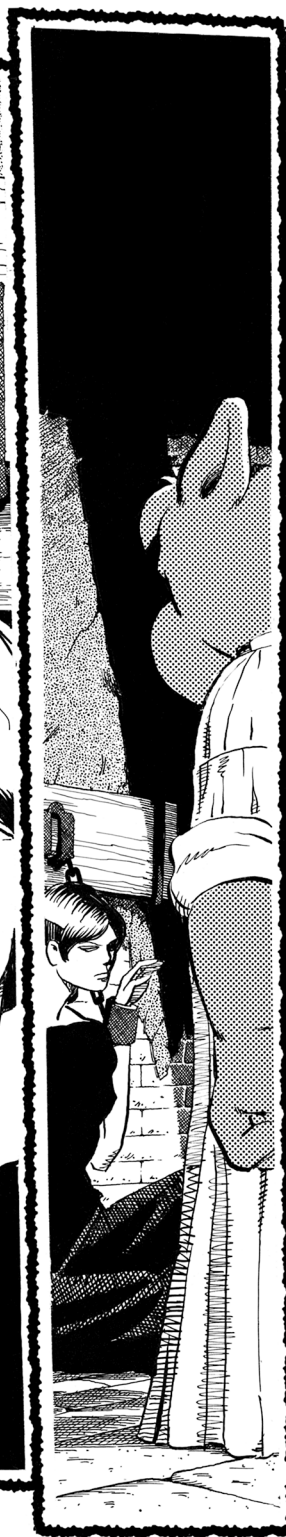
SHE'S
CHAINED
TO THE
WALL!

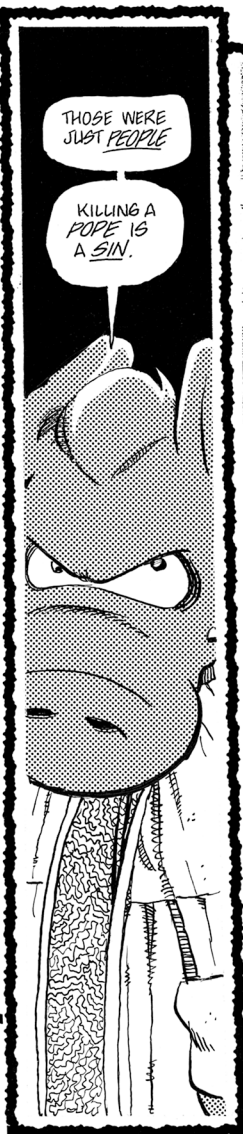


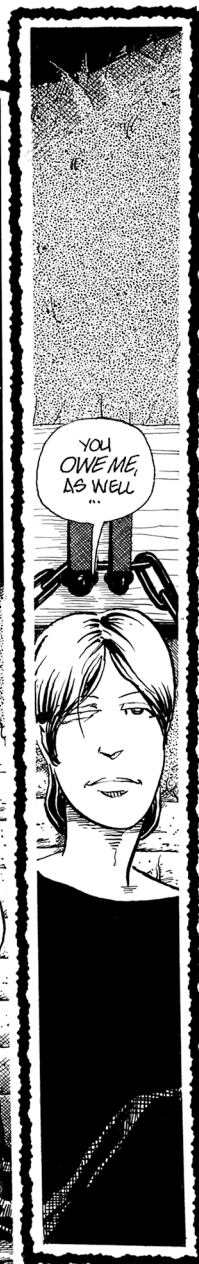


N E X T . S O

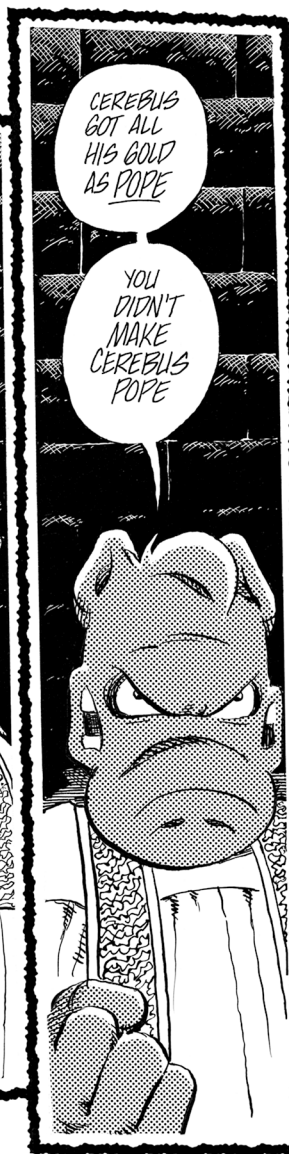




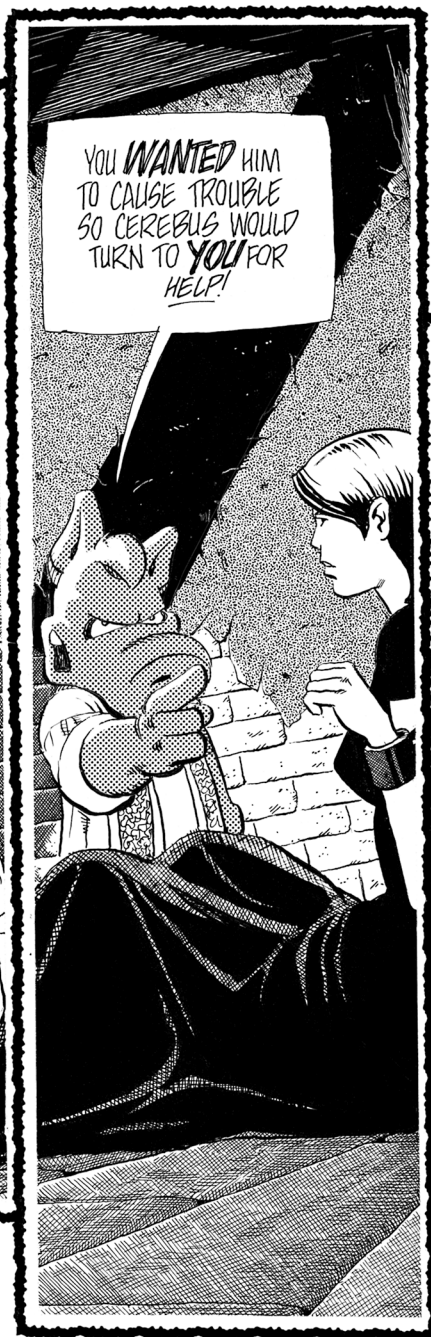


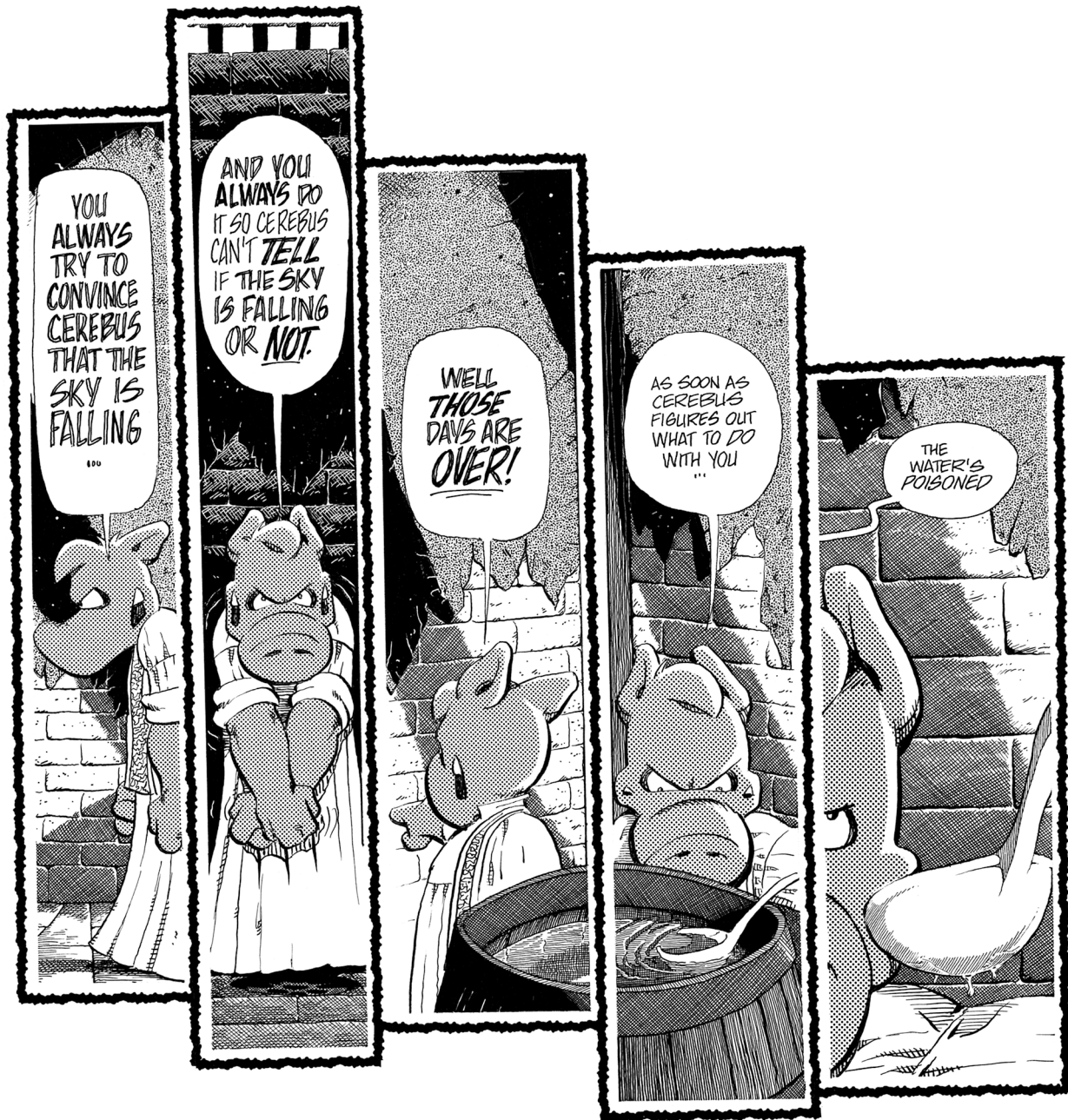




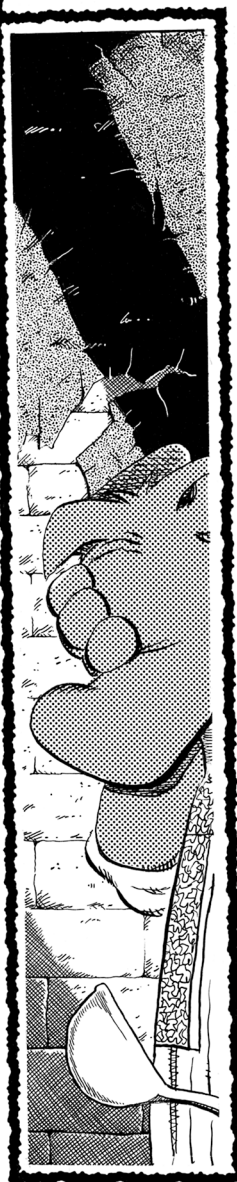




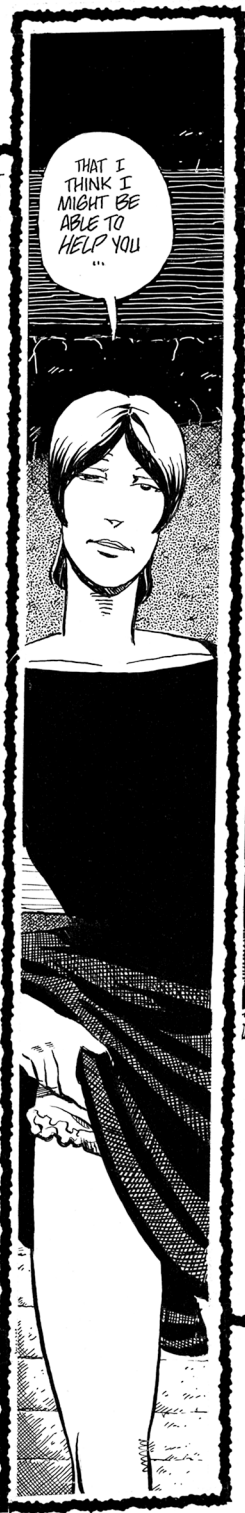














OH, I
FORGOT

YOU
CAN'T,
CAN
YOU?

AS A
GOOD

ORTHODOX

TARIMITE

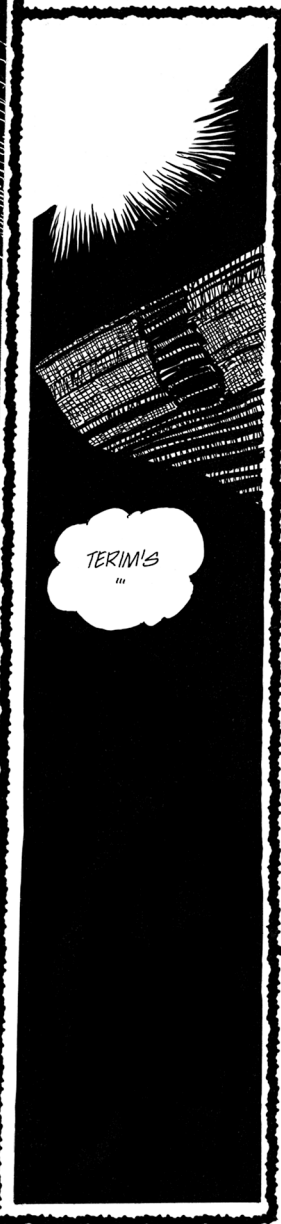
UNLESS YOU'RE
MARRIED,

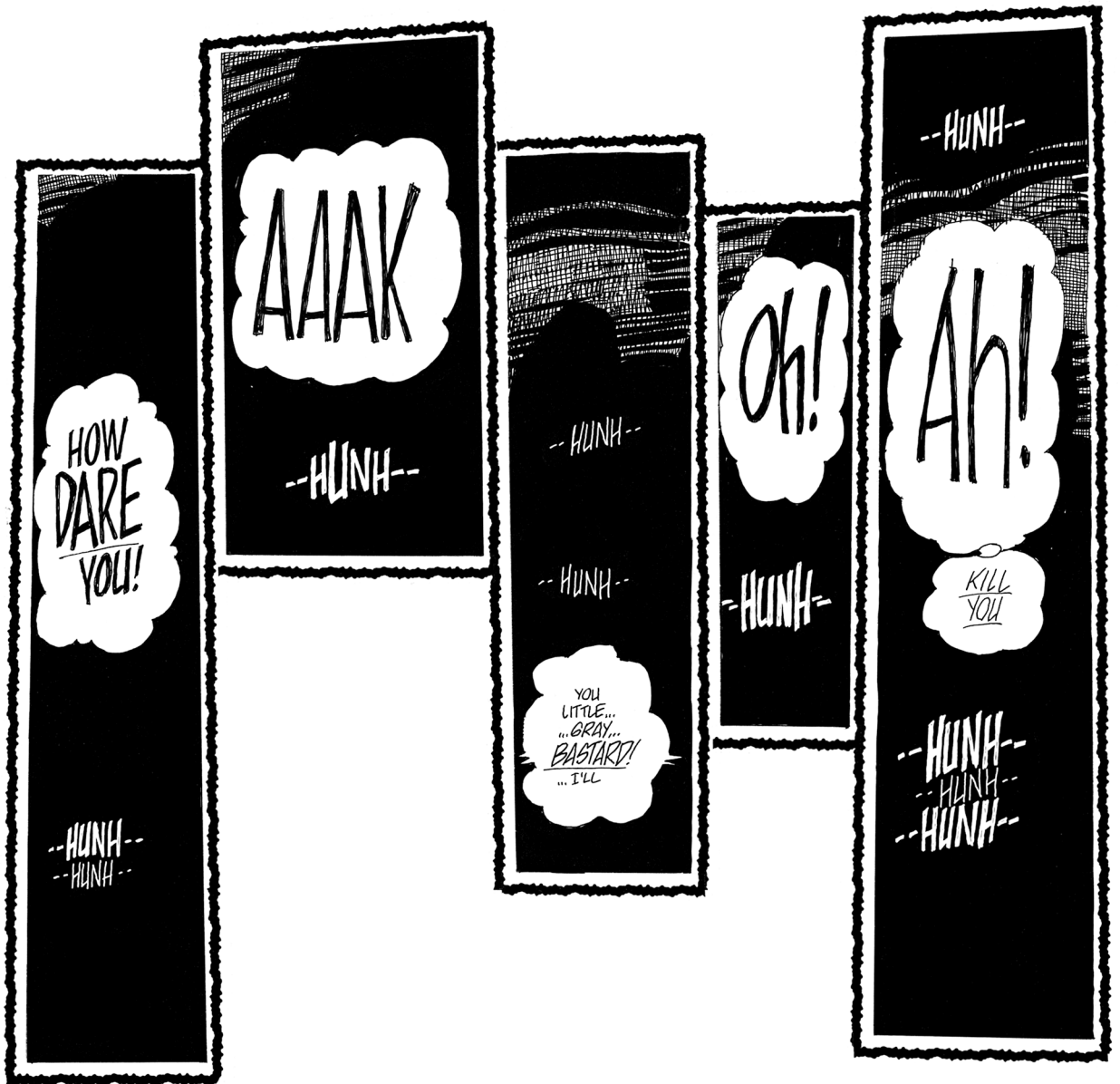
ISN'T
THAT
RIGHT?

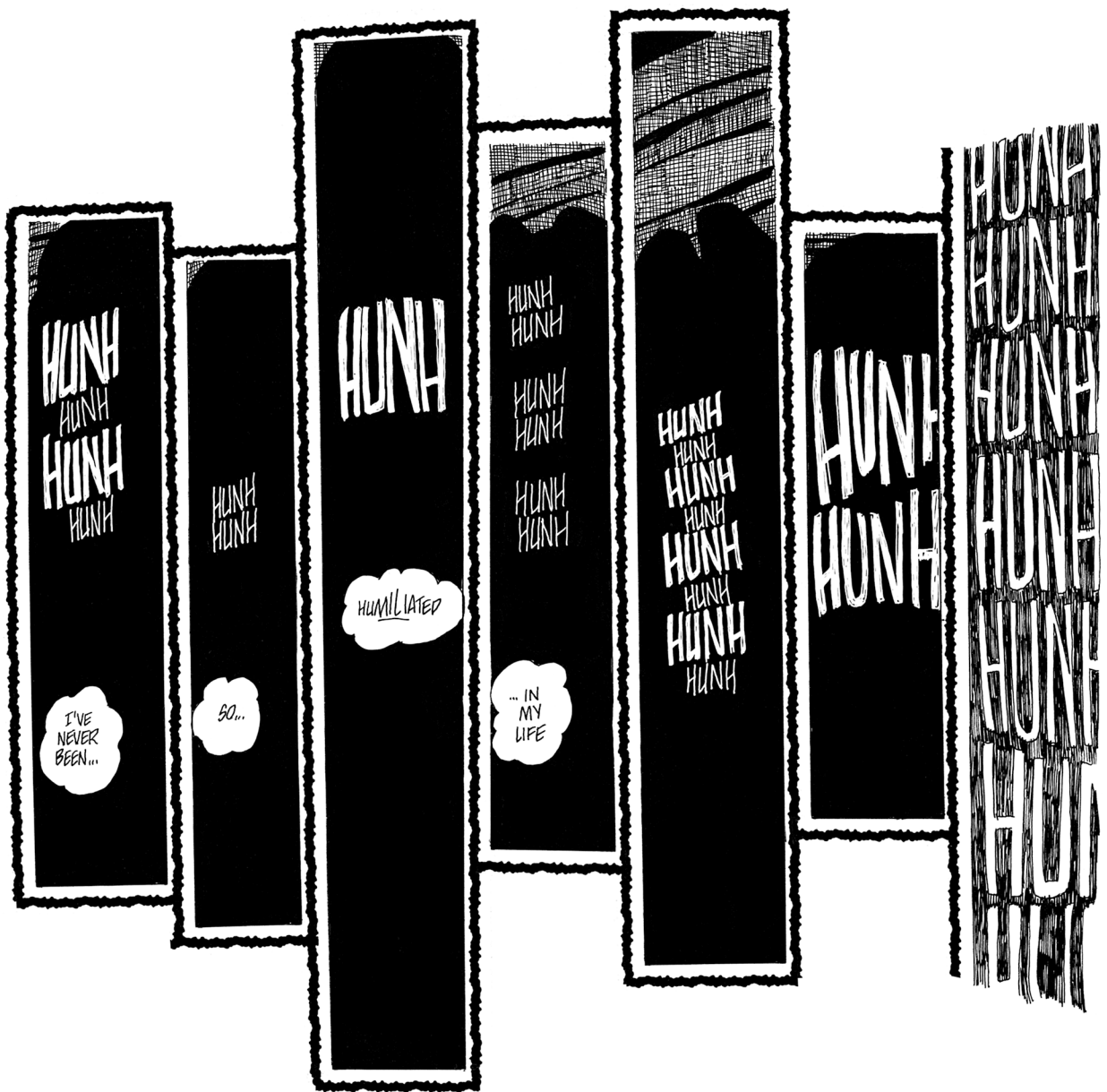
UNLESS
YOU'RE
MARRIED...

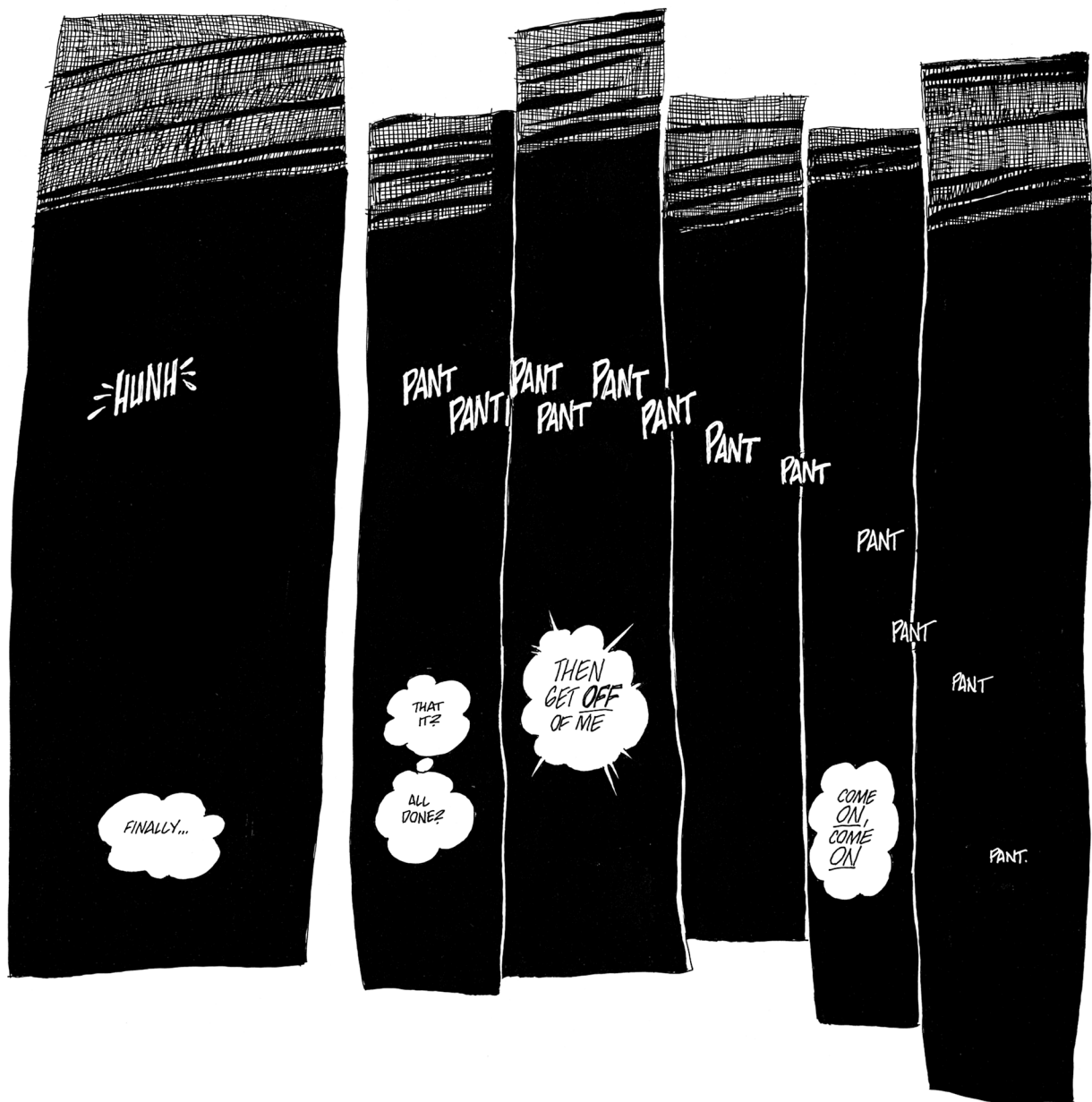
HM?















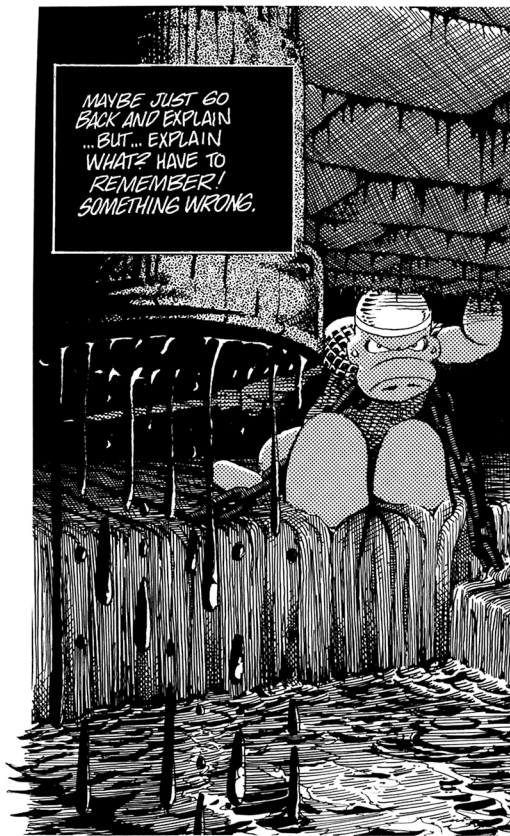
THE CHAINS ARE WHAT MAKE
THE DIFFERENCE, SOMETIMES
LIGHT, SOMETIMES HEAVY.
THEY ARE THERE FOR A REASON
THOUGH HE FORGETS...

... EXACTLY...

SO CRAMPED.
THE ECHOES OF
DROPLETS... OF
LIQUID DISPLACED.
DEAFENING. NO
WAY TO KNOW
...

WHAT HAS CEREBUS
DONE? JUST HAVE
TO... CONCENTRATE...
EVERYTHING IS
FAMILIAR.

ODD
TRANSFORMATION
4



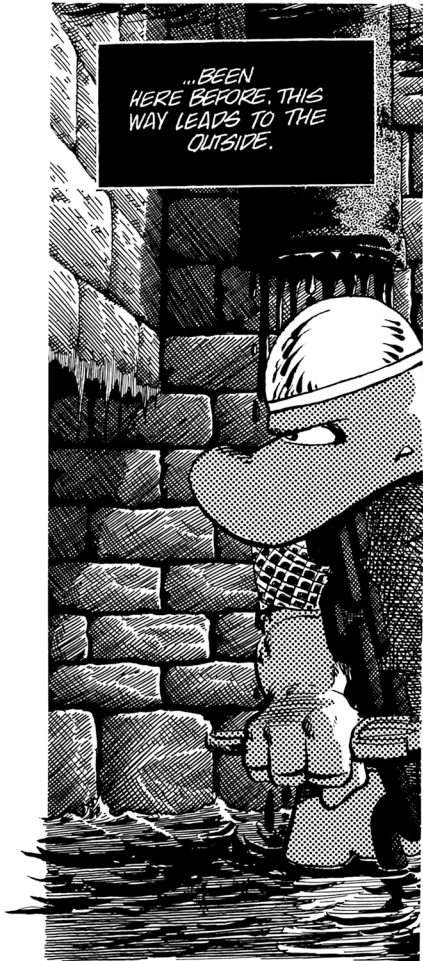
MAYBE JUST GO
BACK AND EXPLAIN
...BUT... EXPLAIN
WHAT? HAVE TO
REMEMBER!
SOMETHING WRONG.



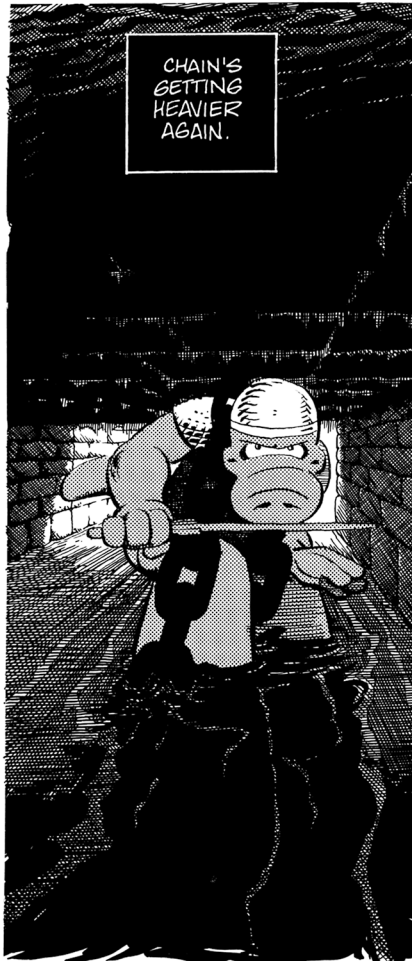
IS THAT IT?
SOMETHING
WRONG? IS
IT SOMETHING
CEREBUS DID
OR SOMETHING
CEREBUS DIDN'T
DO?



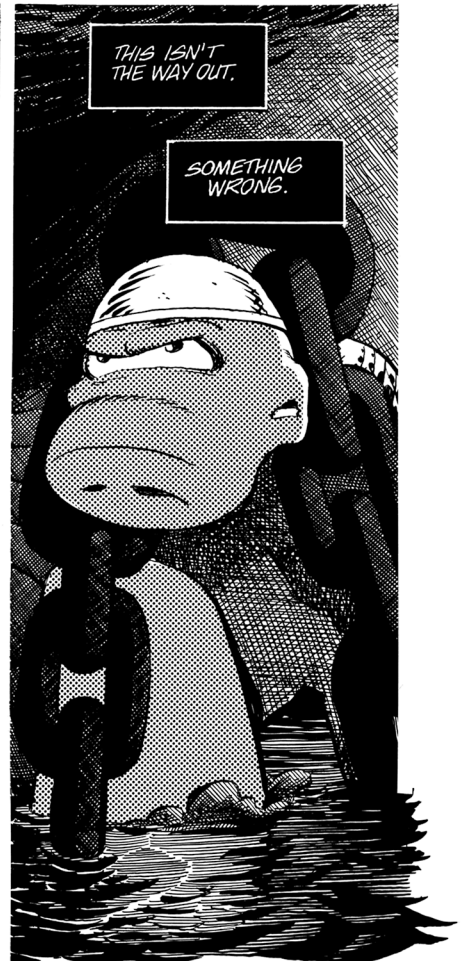
THE CHAINS. IT
HAS SOMETHING
TO DO WITH HOW
CEREBUS GOT
THE...



...BEEN
HERE BEFORE. THIS
WAY LEADS TO THE
OUTSIDE.



CHAIN'S
GETTING
HEAVIER
AGAIN.



THIS ISN'T
THE WAY OUT.

SOMETHING
WRONG.



LINH!



CEREBUS...
DOESN'T...
REMEMBER.



CEREBUS...

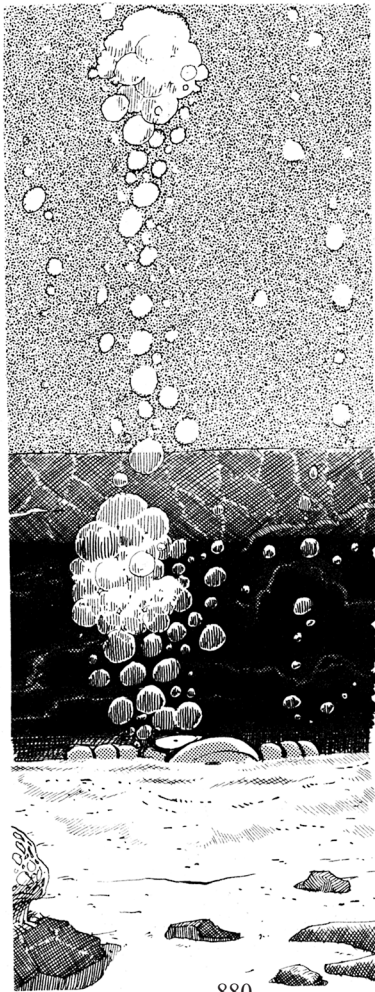
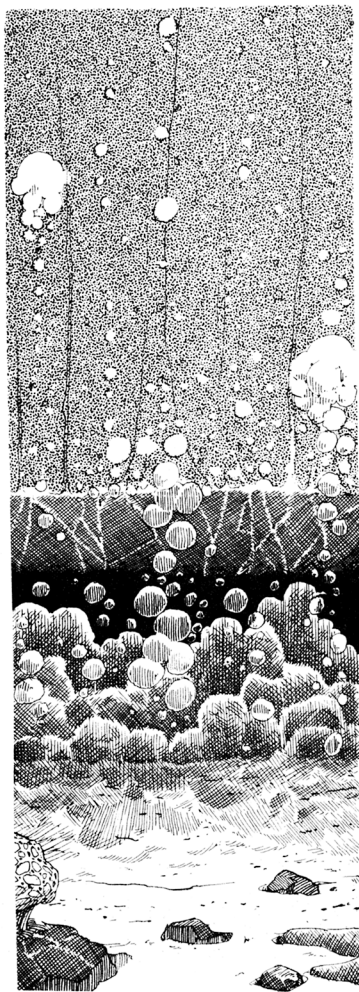
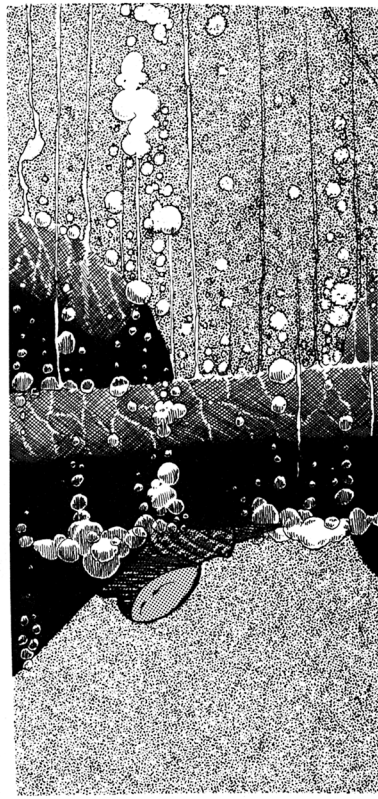
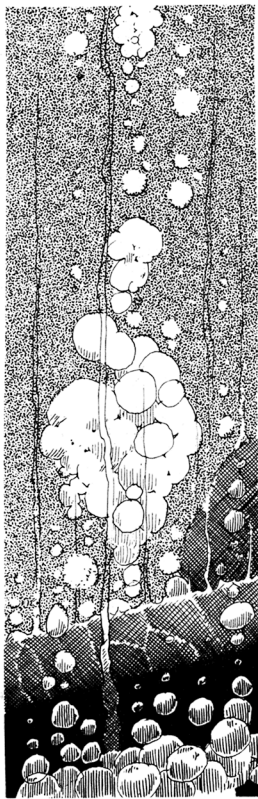
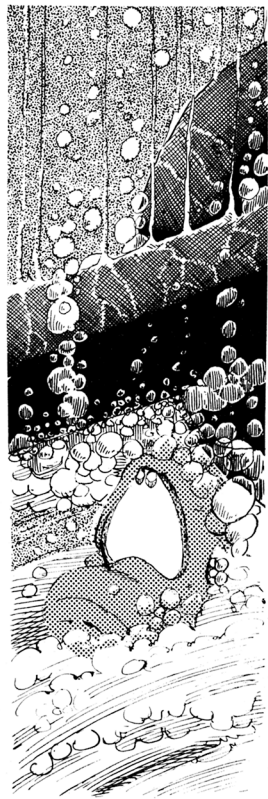
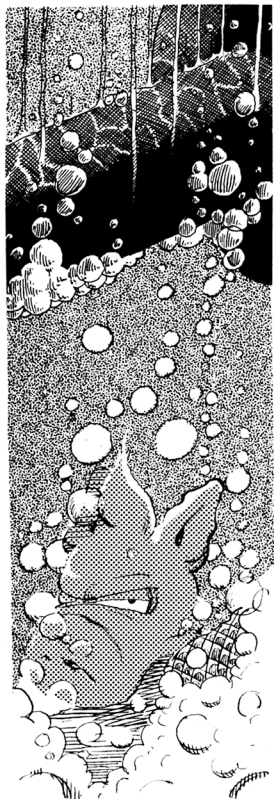
DOESN'T

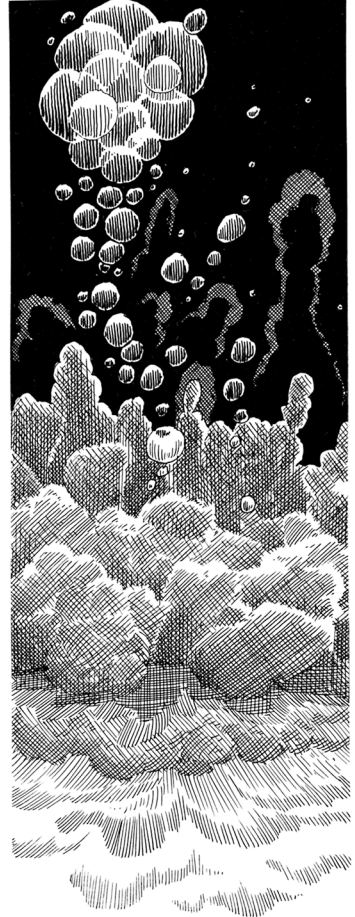
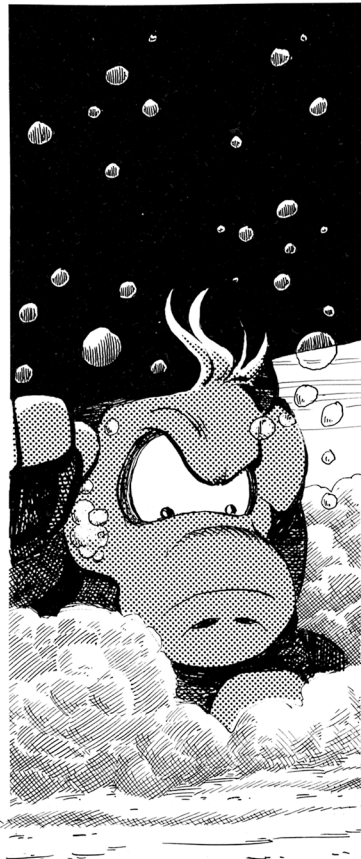
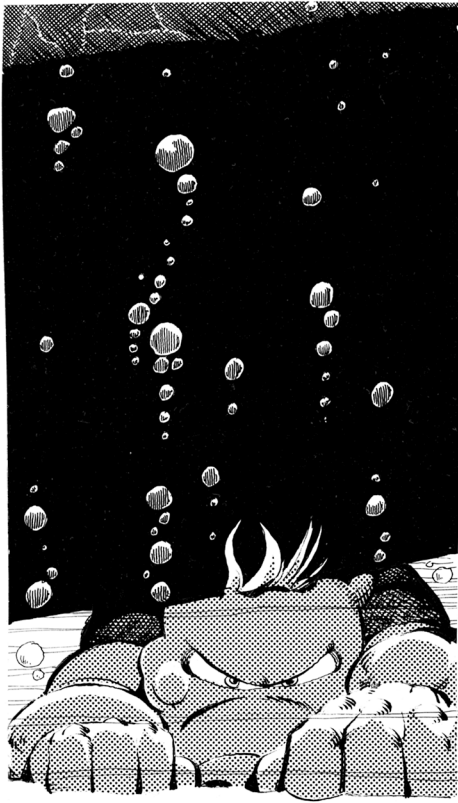


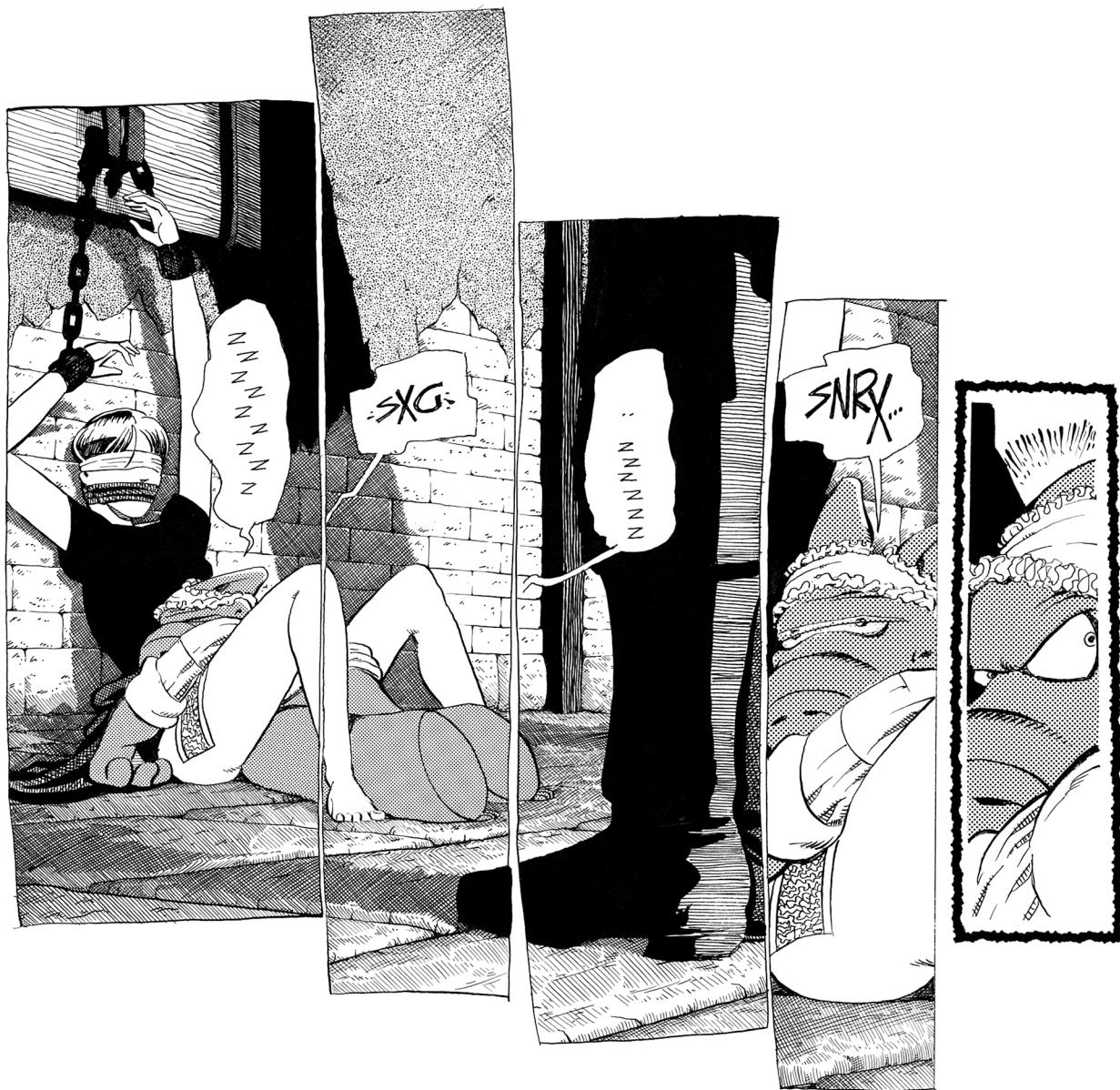
CEREBUS...

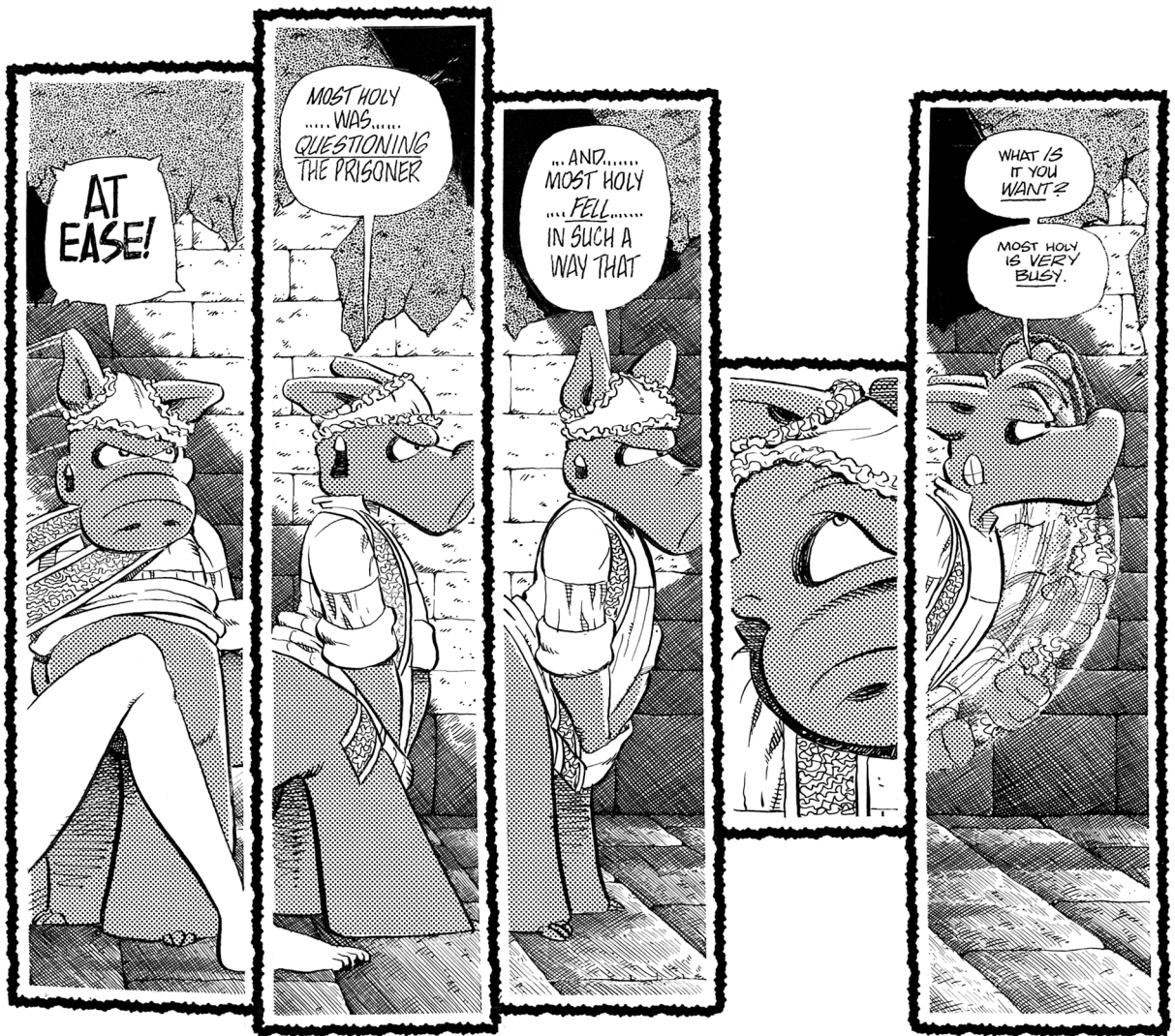
DIDN'T
DO IT.





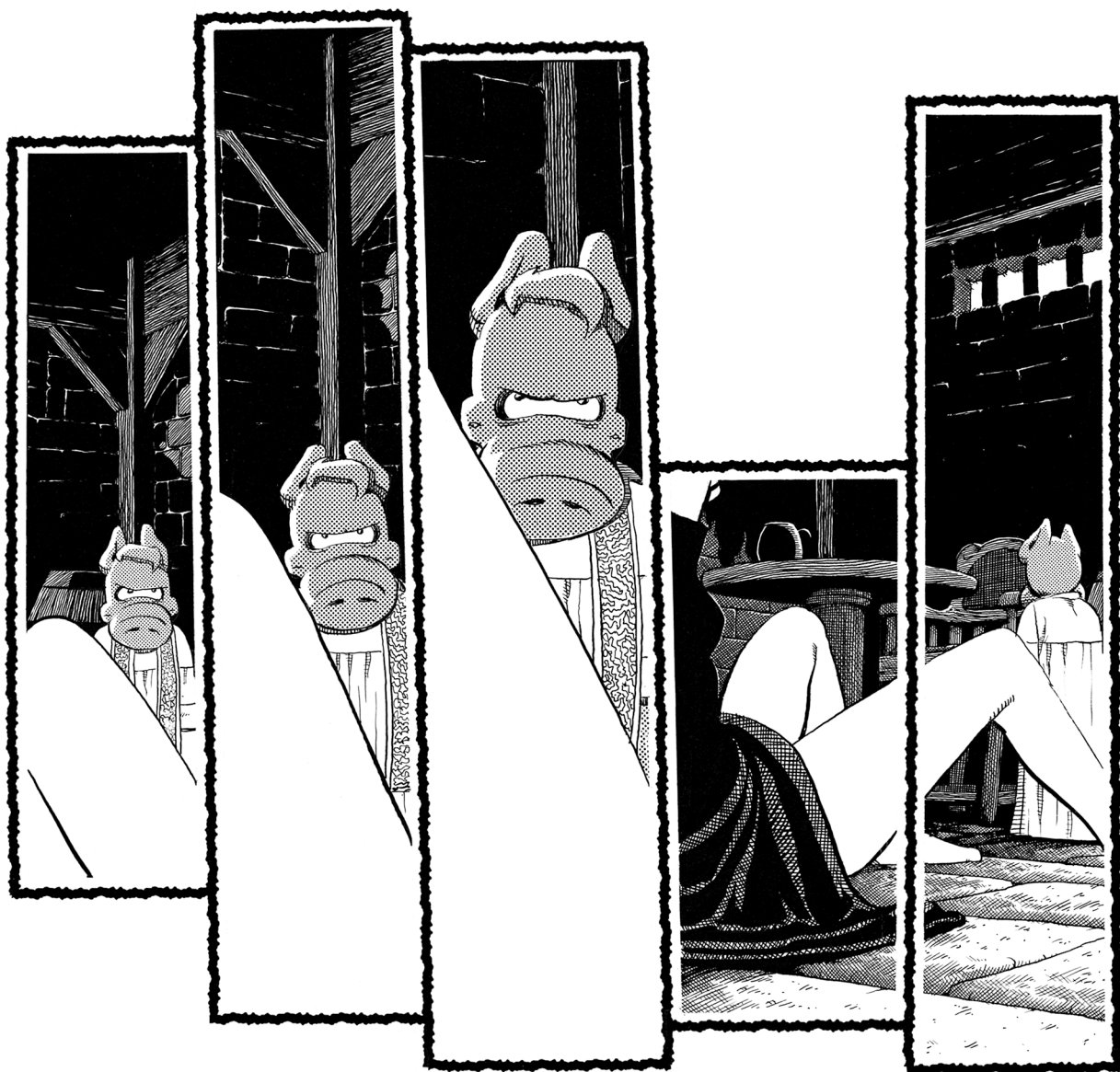


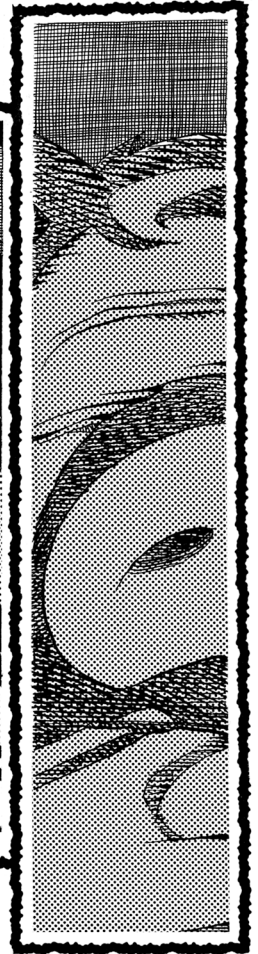
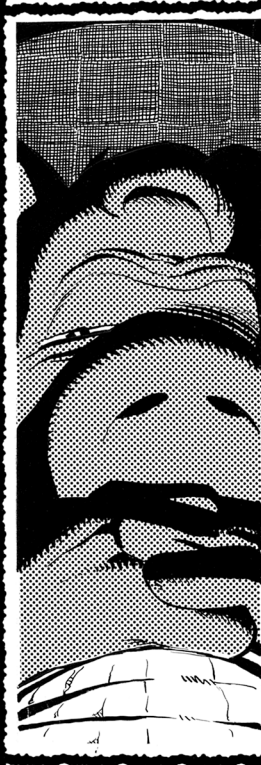
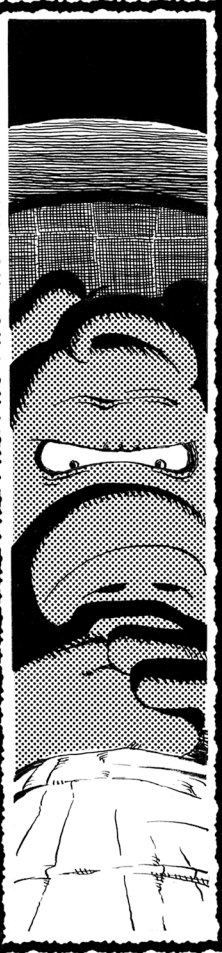










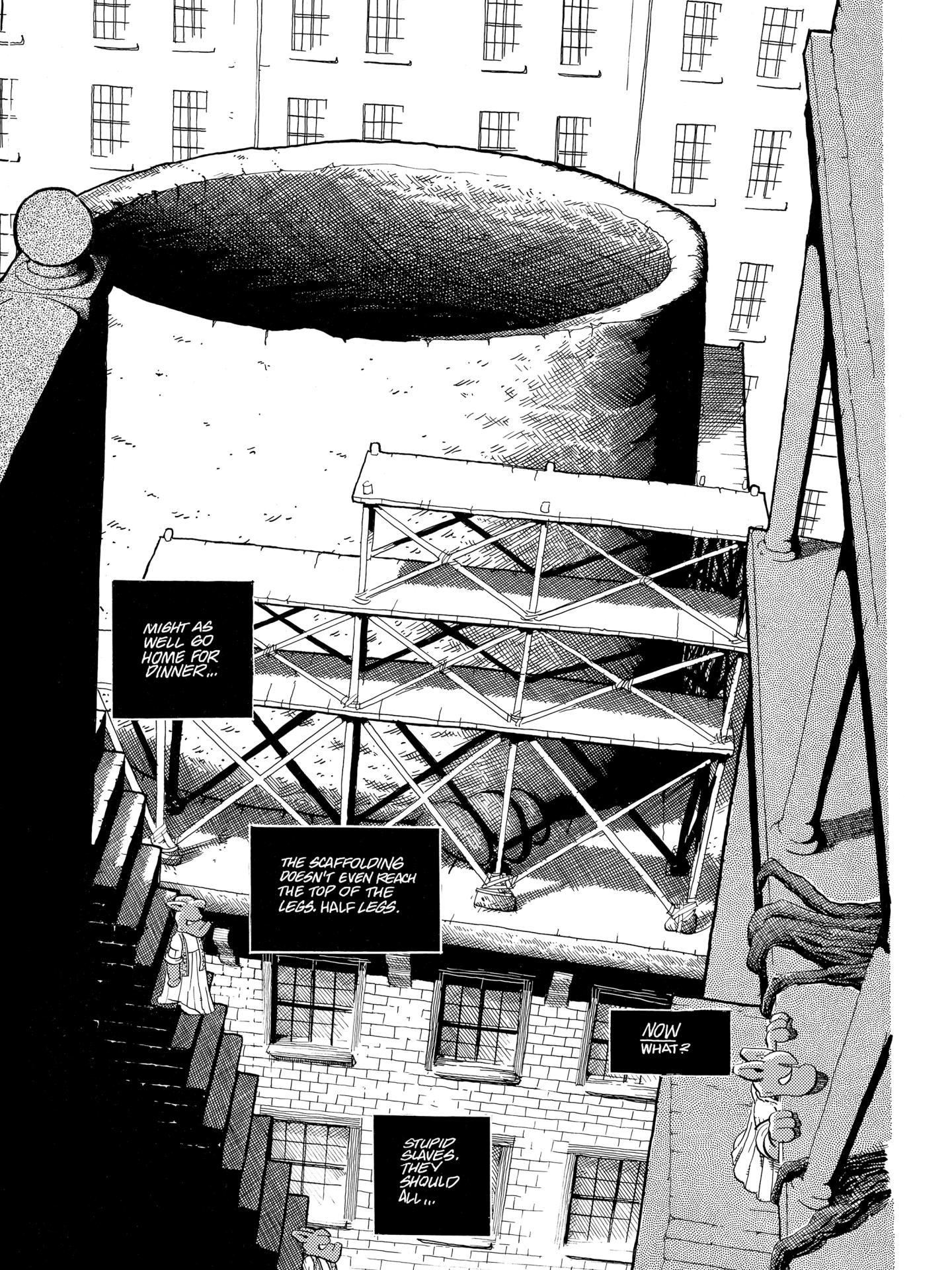




OF A BITCH SLAVES ALWAYS
TRYING TO CAUSE TROUBLE.
CEREBUS TOLD THEM TO
FINISH THE STATUE FIRST.
AND HERE'S THE CITY
NEARLY COMPLETED AND
ALL THERE IS OF THE
STATUE IS TWO LEGS. HALF
LEGS. HOLLOW, NOT SOLID
LIKE IN THE PLANS. STUPID
DAMN SLAVES

CRAP.

ALL CEREBUS EVER
GOT FROM ANYONE
WAS CRAP. NO ONE
EVER DID ANYTHING
RIGHT AND THEY ALL
INTEND TO CAUSE
CEREBUS GRIEF.



MIGHT AS
WELL GO
HOME FOR
DINNER...

THE SCAFFOLDING
DOESN'T EVEN REACH
THE TOP OF THE
LEGS. HALF LEGS.

NOW
WHAT?

STUPID
SLAVES.
THEY
SHOULD
ALL...



TREES! CEREBUS TELLS
HER TO DECORATE THE
SUITE AND SHE GROWS
TREES!

TREES AND A COOKING
FIRE! SHE'LL HAVE
EVERYONE UP HERE
LAUGHING AT CEREBUS

WHERE IS SHE?
BY TARIM, CEREBUS
IS GOING TO GIVE
HER A...



GET
UP.

AND THERE SHE SITS LIKE
A STUPID PEASANT GIRL--
WRAPPING POTATOES IN
LEAVES AND SLIDING THEM
INTO THE HOT COALS
...

HAVE TO SAY IT
AGAIN, SHE
CAN'T HEAR.



CEREBUS IS
TIRED OF YOU
EMBARRASSING
HIM IN FRONT OF
EVERYONE...

YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO DO
IT AGAIN...

SHUT UP! CEREBUS
HAS HEARD IT
ALL BEFORE!

NO ONE'S
GOING TO SAVE
YOU THIS
TIME...



GOT
YOU!!

ONE LESS MOUTH
TO FEED IS ONE
LESS MOUTH TO
FEED.



SOMETHING
WRONG.

SHE'S
HARDLY
FALLING
AT ALL--
THE WIND OR
SOMETHING
HOLDING HER
UP...

SHE'S SAYING
SOMETHING.
SPEAK UP.
CEREBUS
CAN'T...

THREE- THREE
WHAT? YOU
HAVE TO SAY IT
SLOWER...



MM. THERE
SHE GOES
NOW

FASTER AND
FASTER

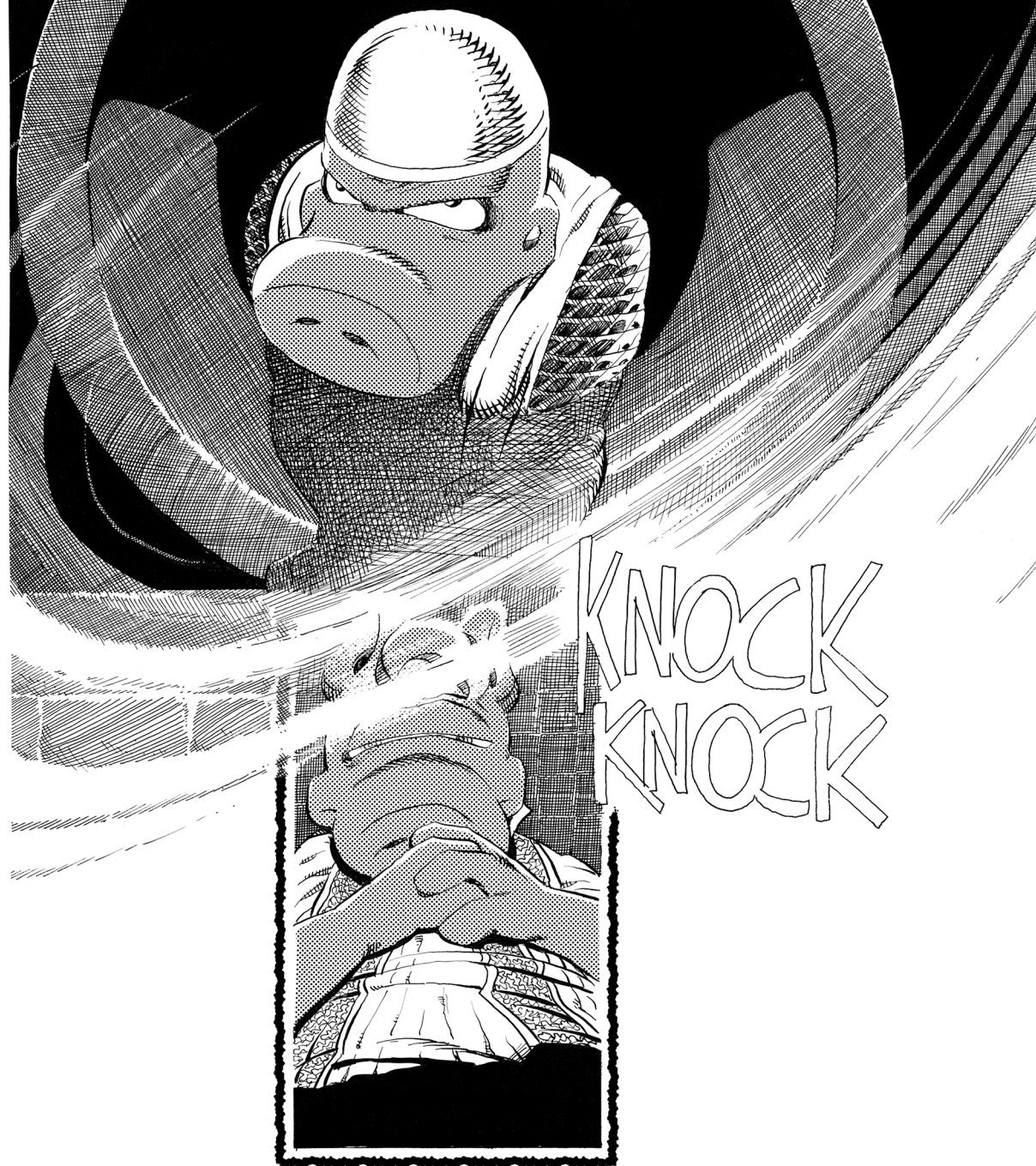
AND FASTER
AND...

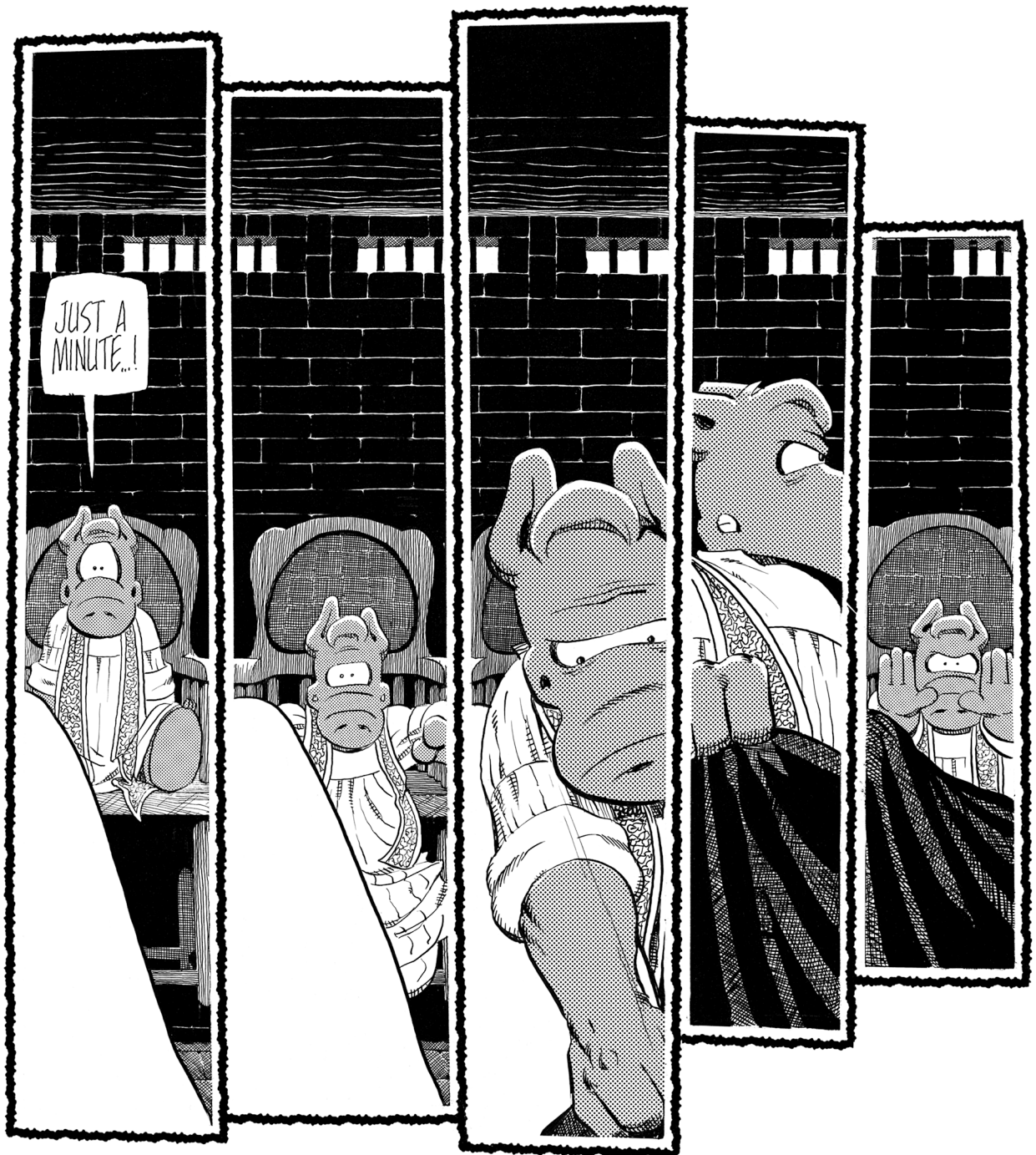


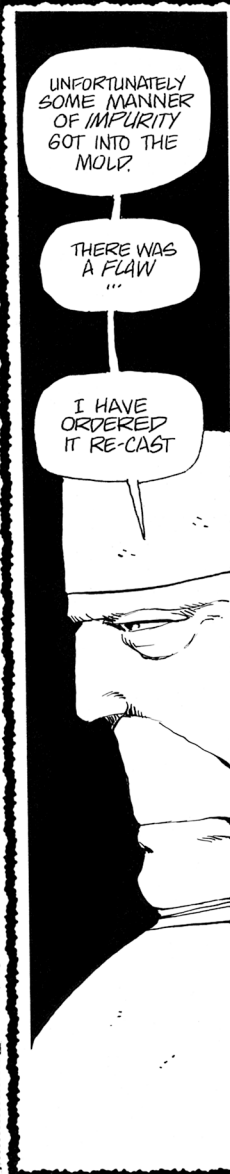
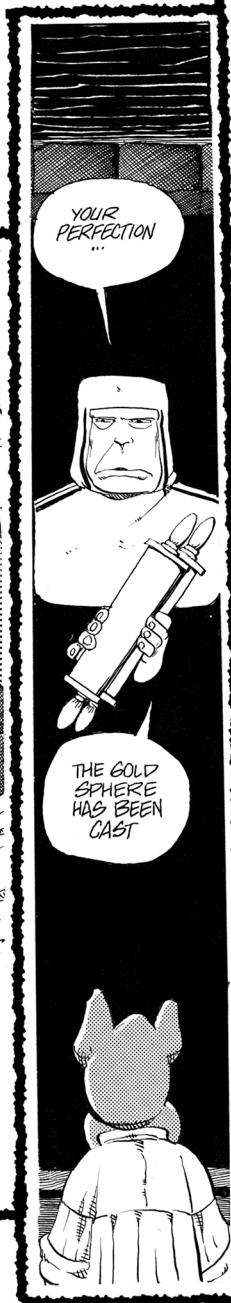
BOOM.

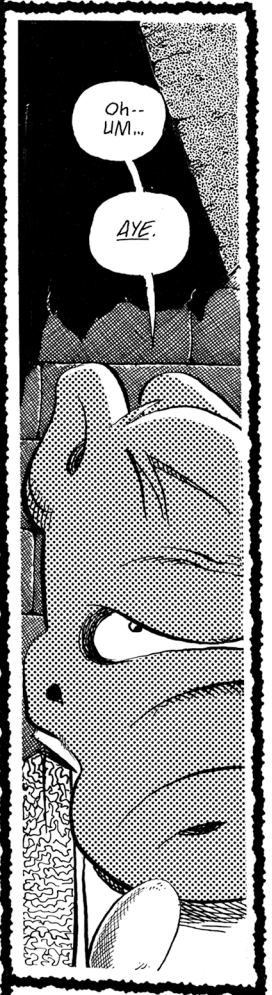
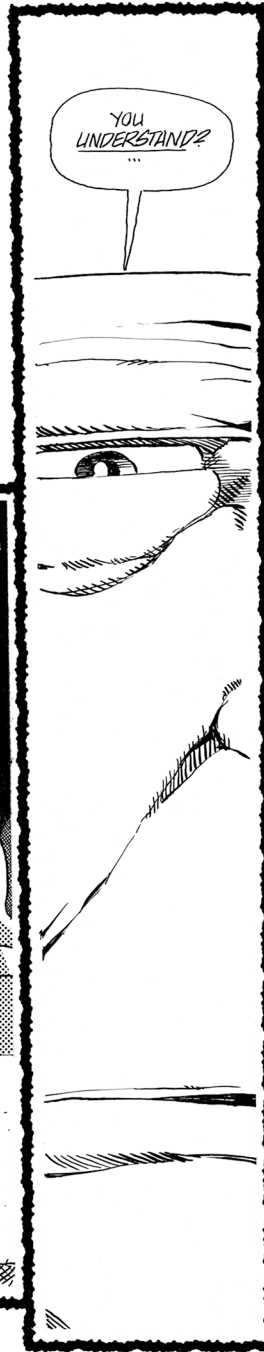
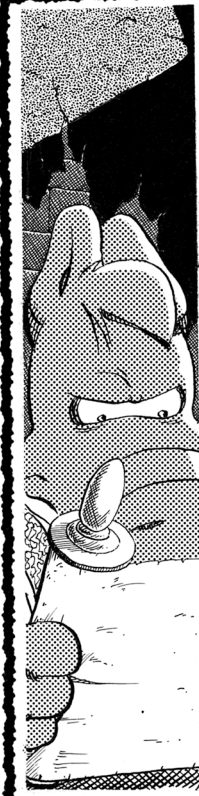
NEXT: AN ANCHOR THAT'S GOING PLACES

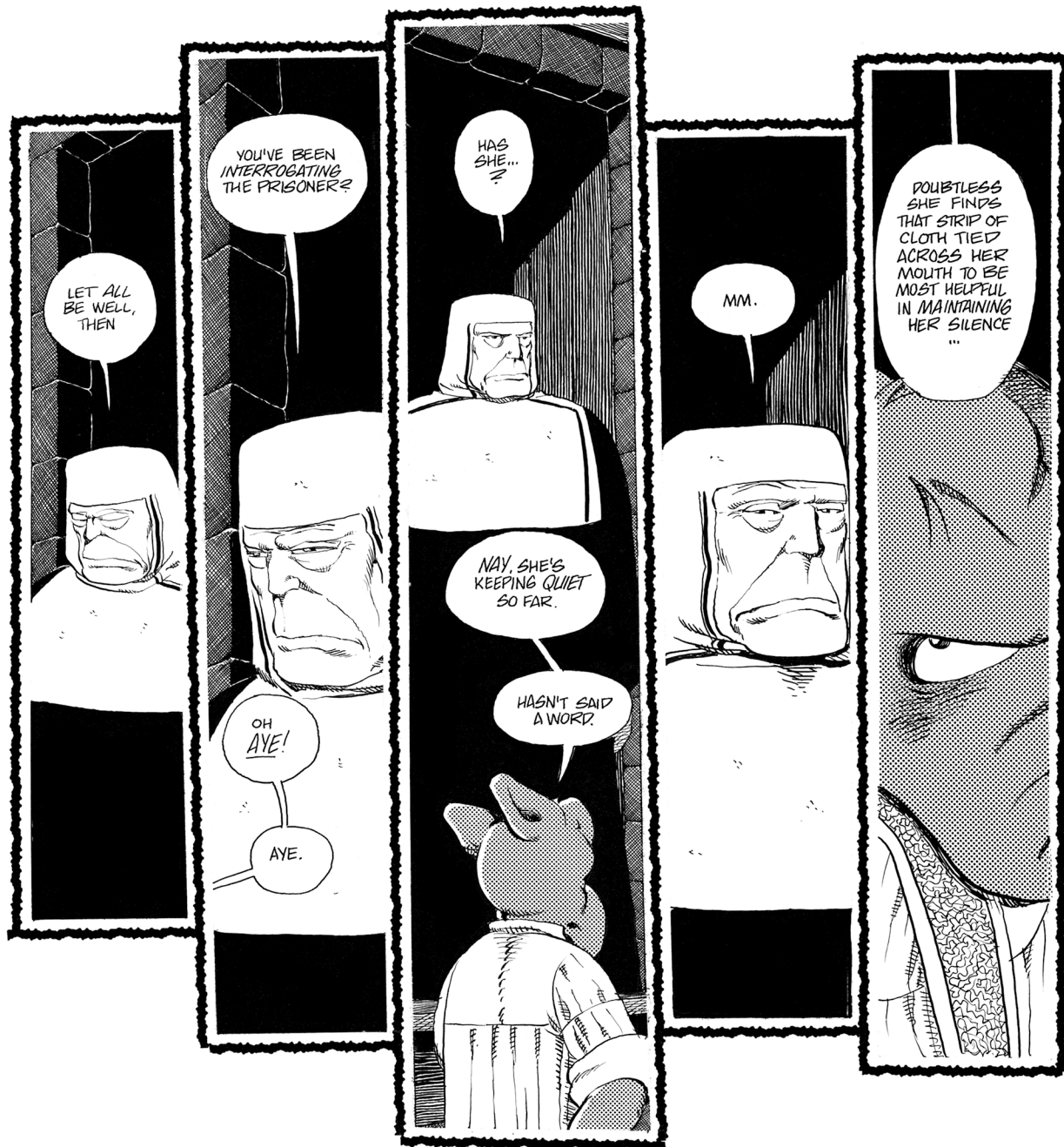
AN ANCHOR THAT'S GOING PLACES















UH.



JUST
AS I
SUSPECTED

WELL YOU CAN
JUST FORGET
IT. UNDERSTAND?



THE ASCENSION
IS A SACRED
TRUST HUNDREDS
OF THOUSANDS
OF YEARS
OLD.

BETWEEN
TERIM AND
HER ADHERENTS



FOR THE PAST
SEVEN
THOUSAND
YEARS, YOU
MALES
HAVE BEEN
MEDDLING
WITH IT...



THE WAY SHE
KEEPS KNOCKING
THE TOWER
OVER ON TOP
OF ALL OF
YOU. I SHOULD
THINK YOU
WOULD'VE
GOTTEN THE
MESSAGE
BY NOW





WELL-- IF
CEREBUS
MET HER
CEREBUS
WOULD...

WHEN
MOST HOLY
MEETS
HIM,
MOST HOLY
WILL ASK WHERE
WEISSHAUPT'S
SOUL IS...

WEISS-
HAUPT'S
SOUL?

WHAT-
EVER
FOR?

SO HE CAN
SEE THAT
CEREBUS
WON

CEREBUS
BEAT
HIM
...









CEREBUS
DOESN'T
KNOW,

IT'S IN A
DIFFERENT
LANGUAGE

LET
ME
SEE.

ANCIENT
PIST...

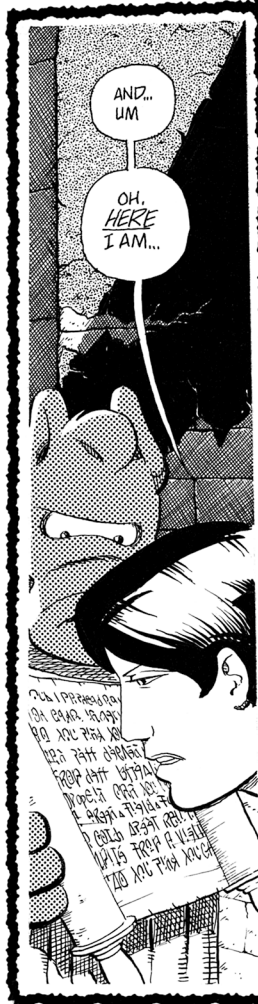
IT'S A
REQUEST
FOR A
TRIAL.

MINE.

LET'S SEE.
THERE'S
SOME FLOWERY
LANGUAGE
ABOUT
SERREA...

SLIGHTLY
LESS FLOWERY
BITS ABOUT
IEST...

THEN THEY GET
DOWNRIGHT
FESTIVE IN
DISCUSSING
YOU...

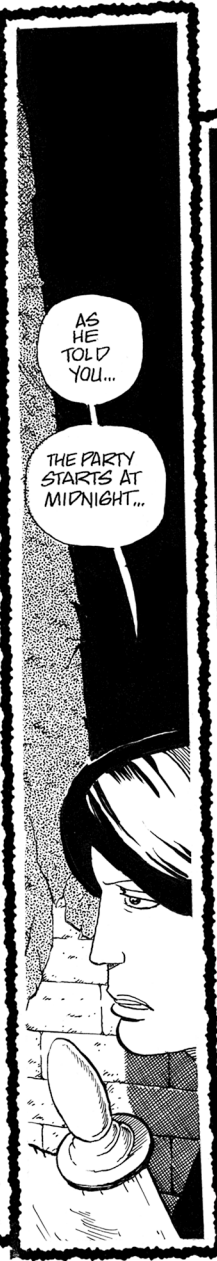


AND...
UM

OH,
HERE
I AM...



"THE GODLESS,
ATHEISTIC,
MATRIARCHAL,
BABY-KILLING,
SLUT, BITCH,
SORCERESS"
...



AS
HE
TOLD
YOU...

THE PARTY
STARTS AT
MIDNIGHT...

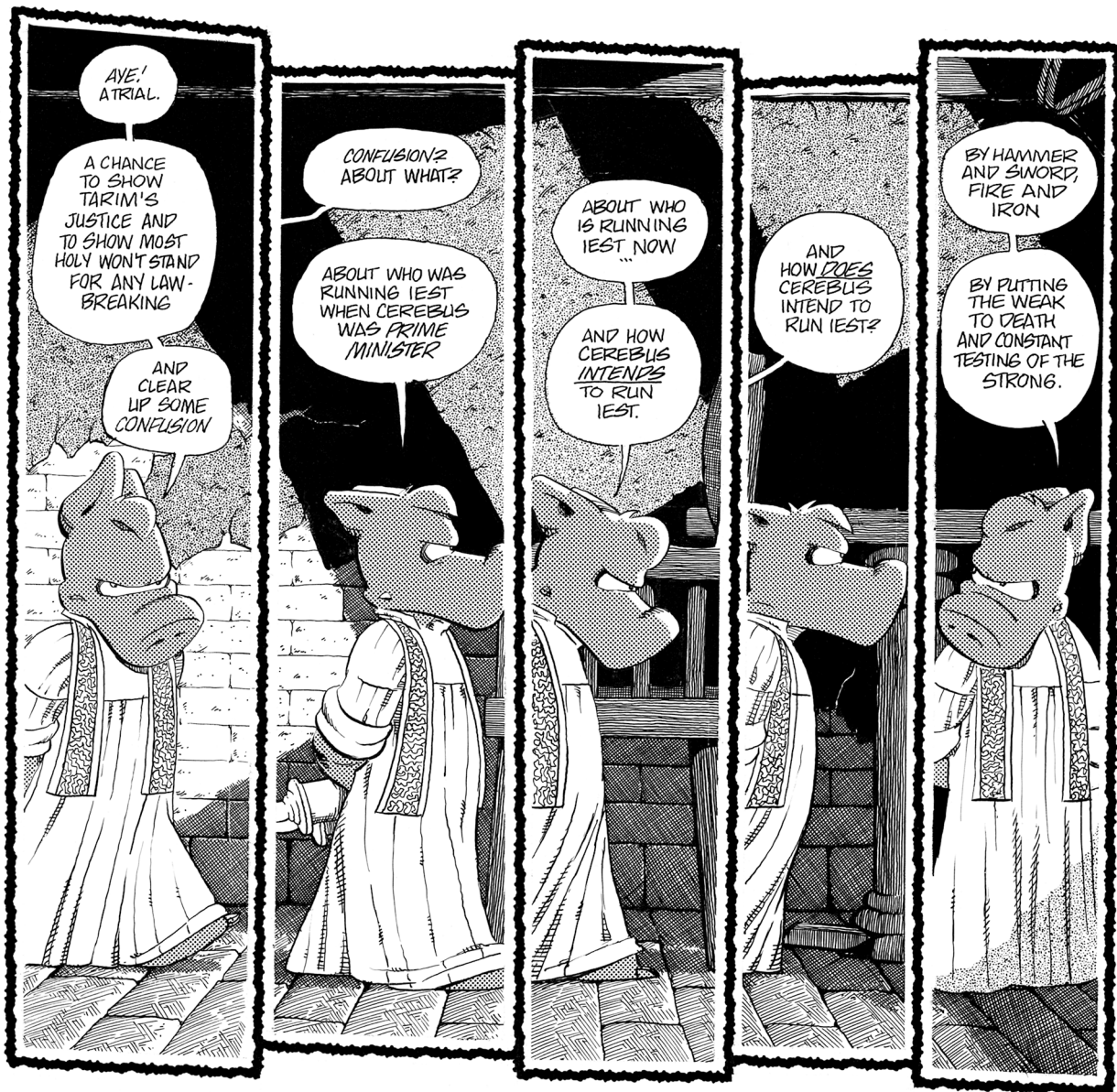


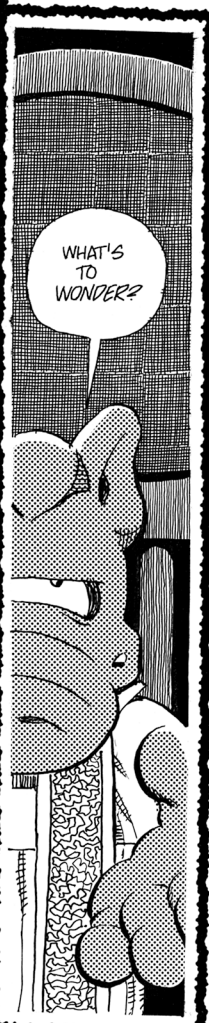
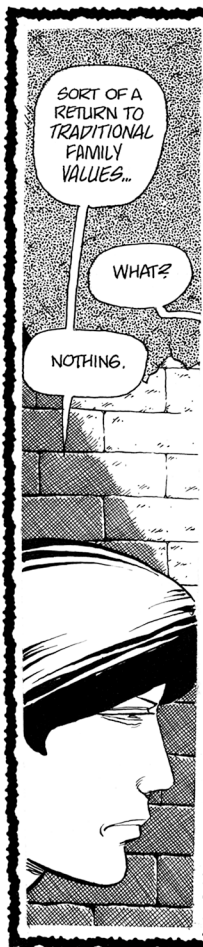
JUDGING BY
THE COMPOSITION, I
WOULD IMAGINE THE
WESTERN MILITARY
IS LARGELY
RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE CONTENT
...



THEY
STRONGLY
URGE AN
EXECUTION
BY FIRE...

OR
SOMETHING
EQUALLY
CROWD
PLEASING
...













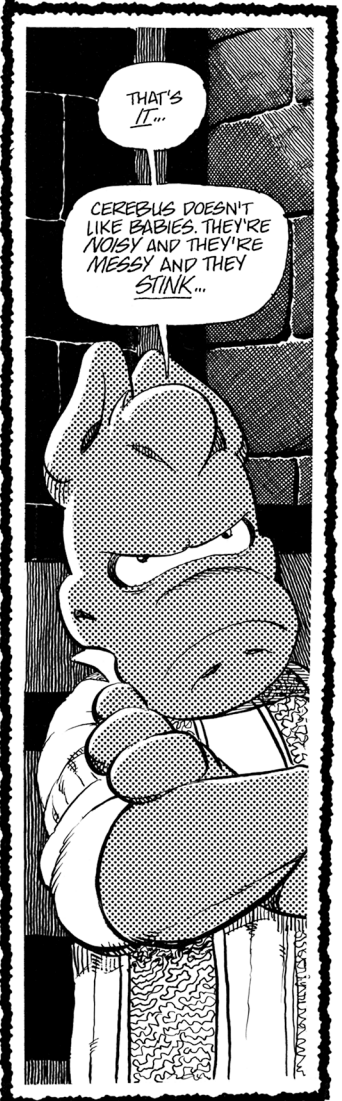
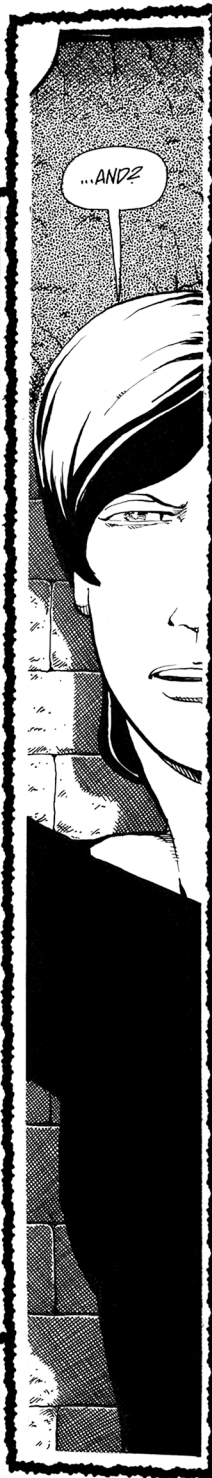
* TEAR-IM

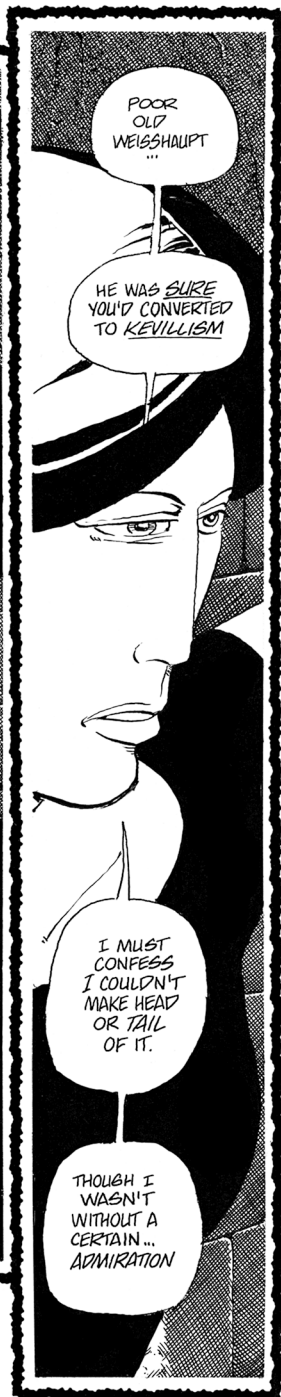
* TAY-RIM

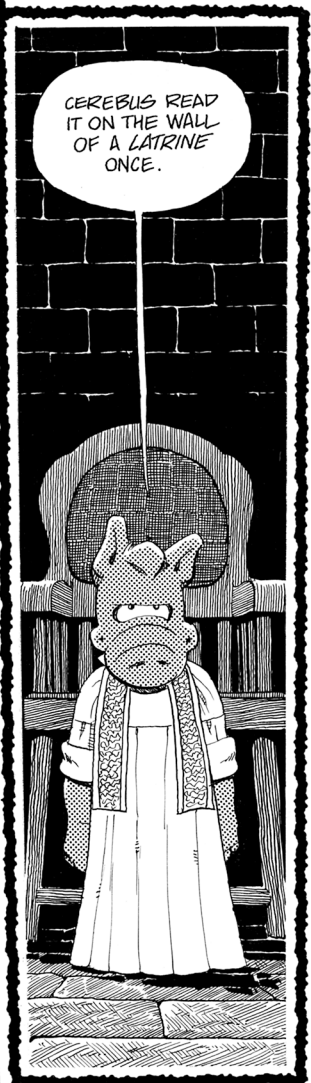
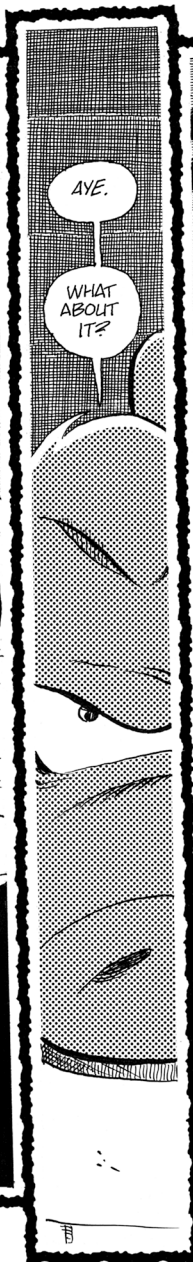
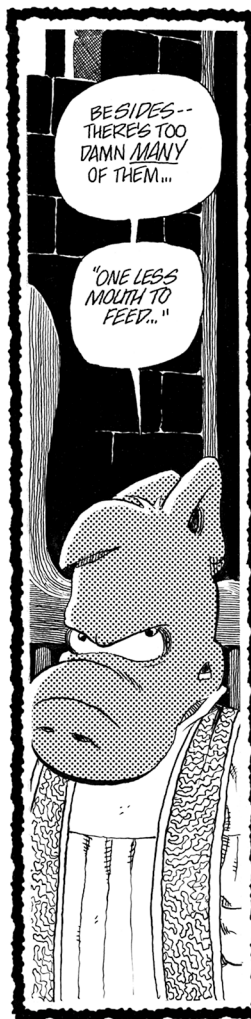
NEXT:
MORE theology

the UNKNOWN GIVEN



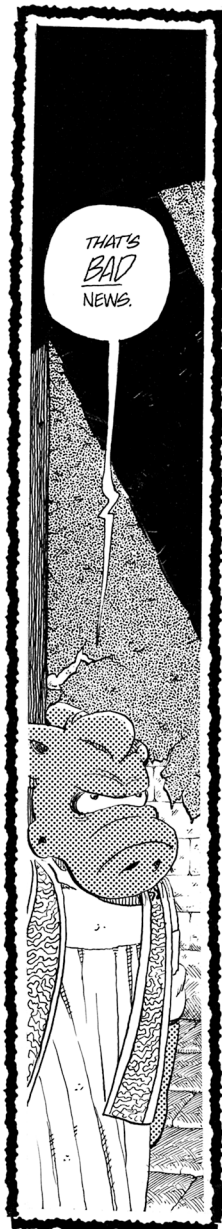


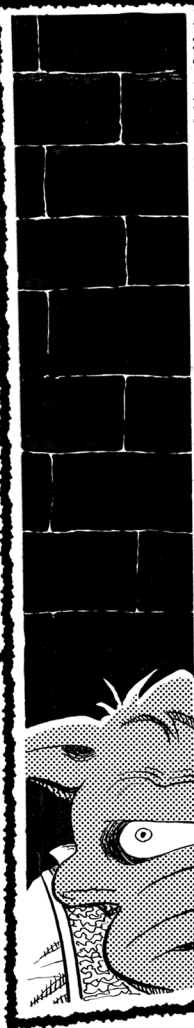




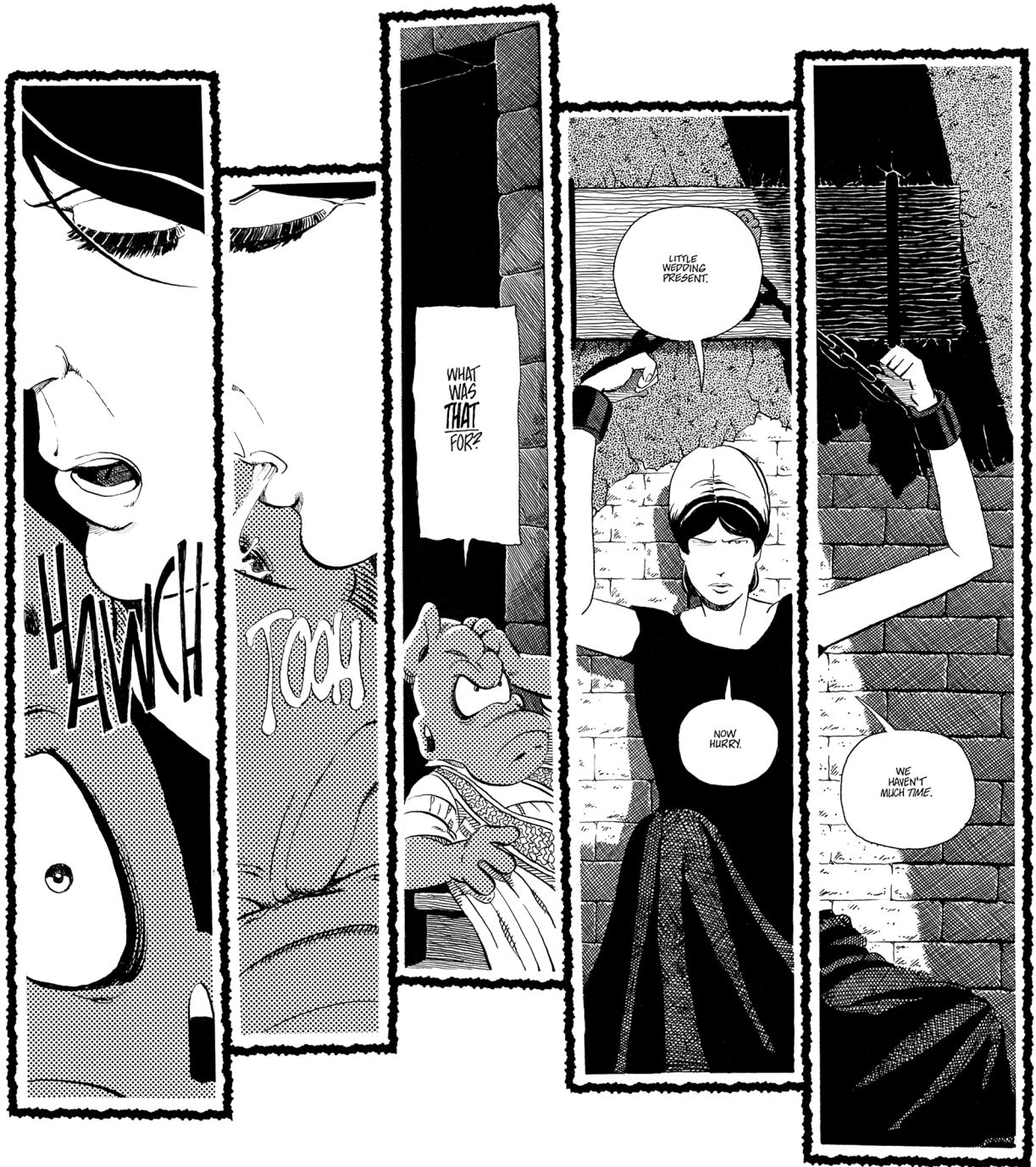


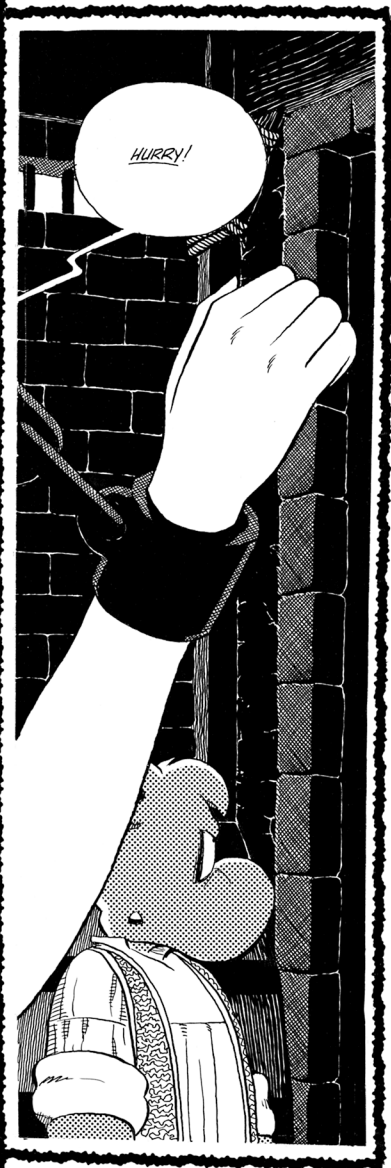
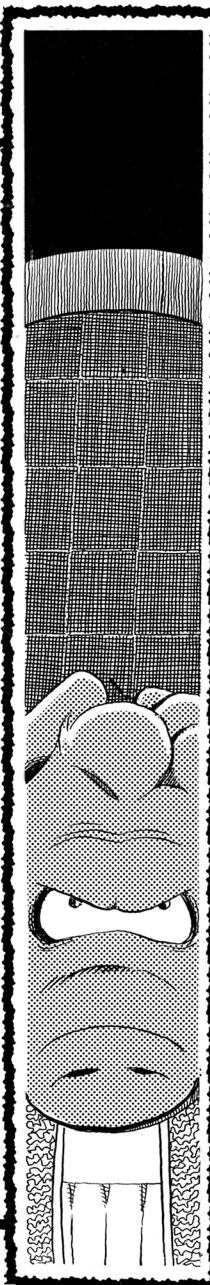
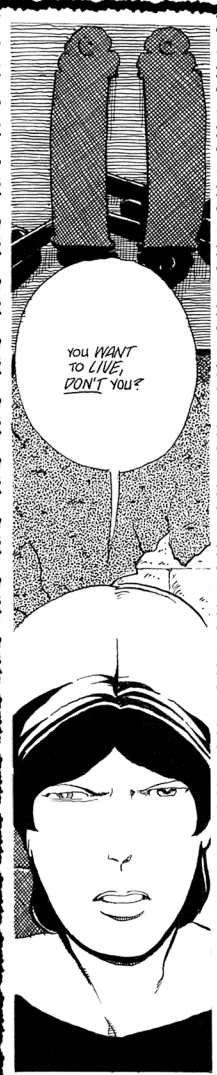
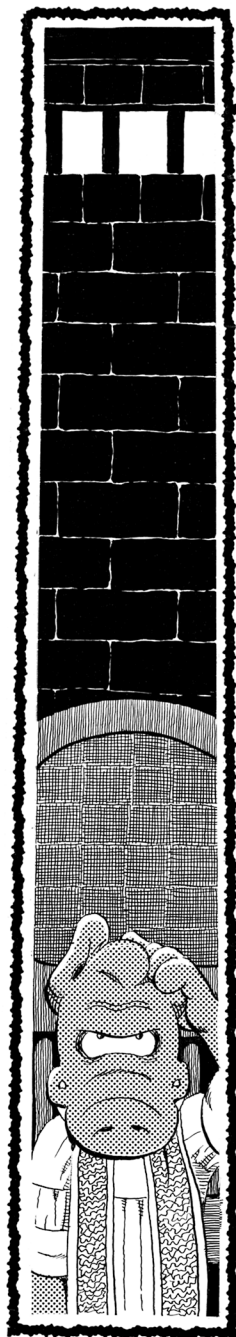


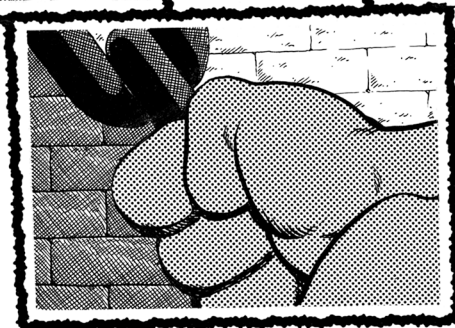
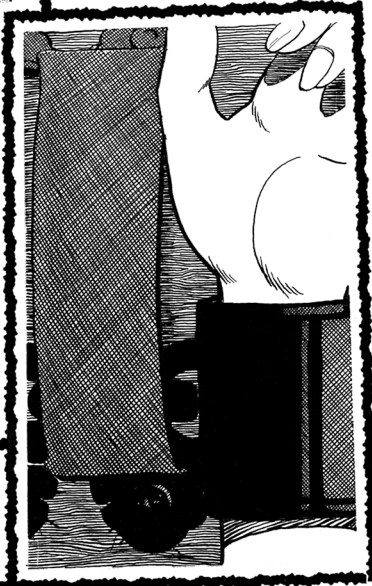


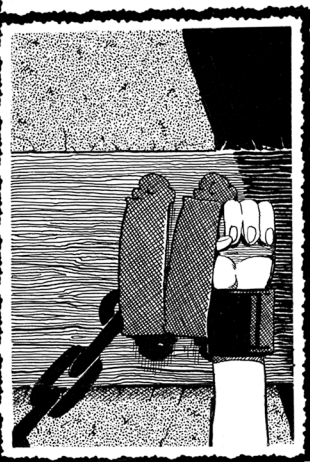


















I
HOPE
THAT IS
AS YOU
WISHED,
YOUR
PERFECTION
...

OH.
UM.
AYE.
WELL
DONE.

AYE.

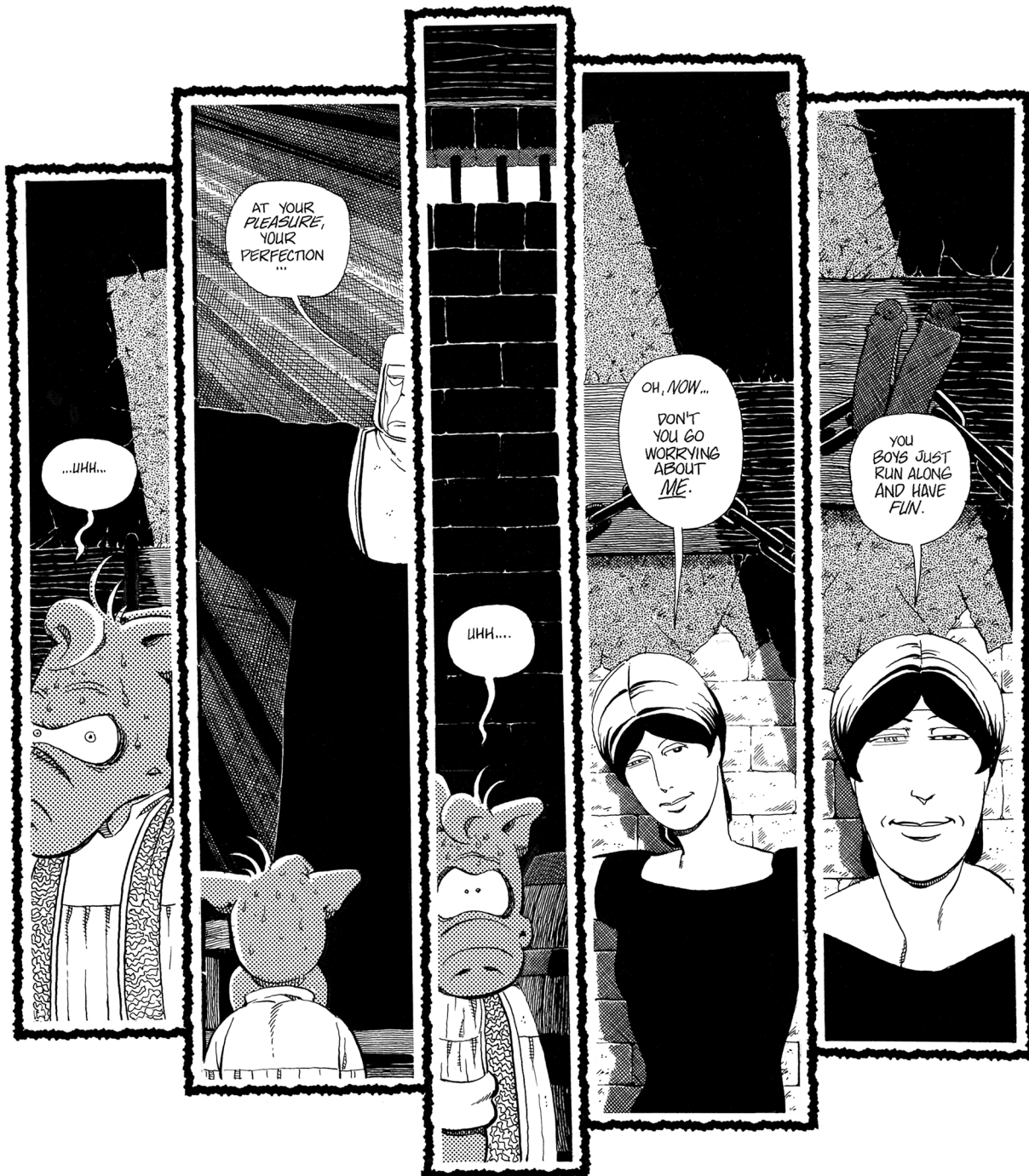
AND NOW
IT IS IMPERATIVE
THAT WE LEAVE
FOR THE UPPER
CITY. THE
THRONE ROOM
IS BEING
READIED,,

WELL,
ACTUALLY,
CEREBUS
...

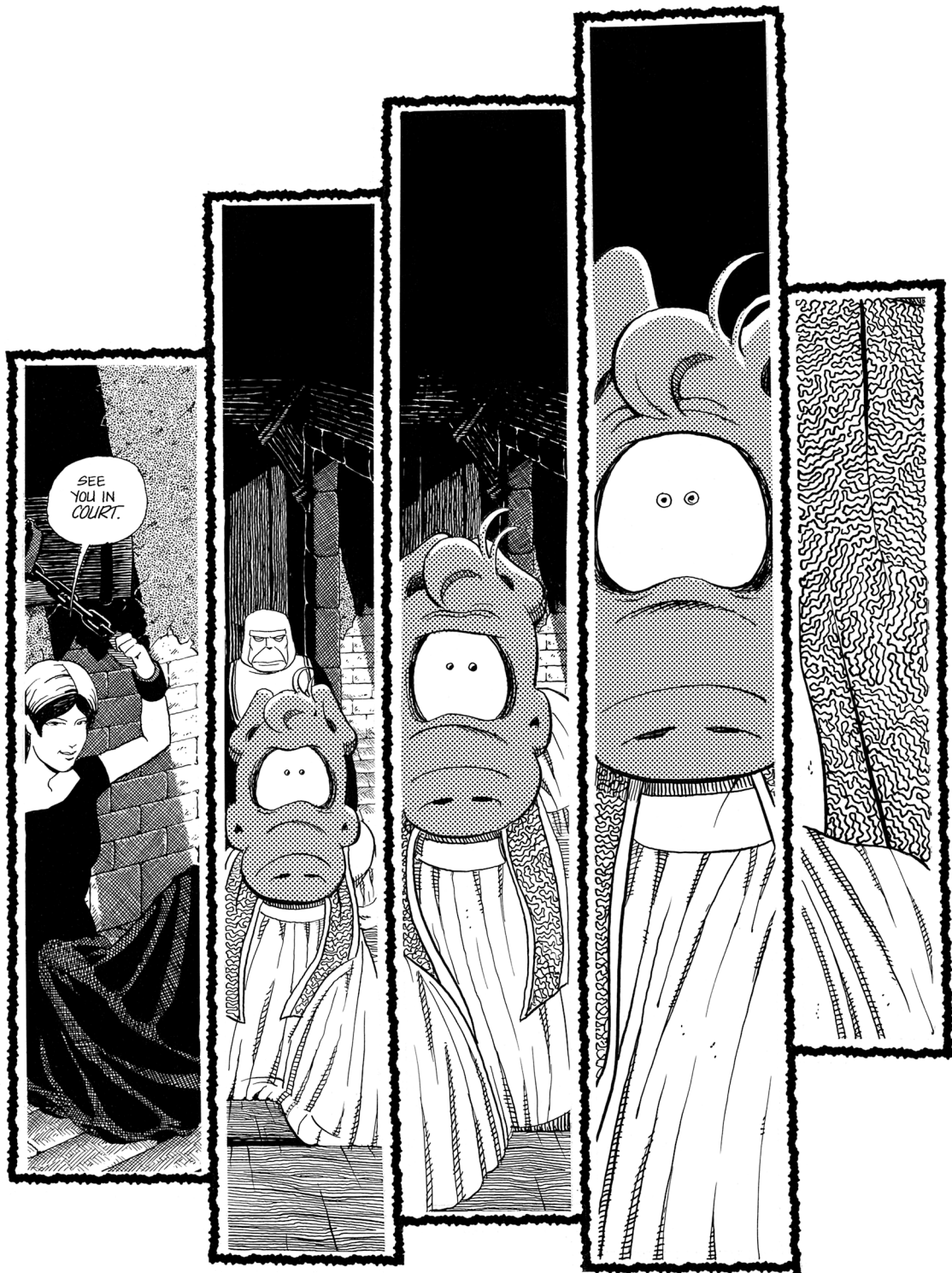
... IS
BEING
READIED
AND THERE
ARE A NUMBER
OF RITES
WHICH MUST
BE PERFORMED
BY YOUR
PERFECTION
...

BEFORE
MID-
NIGHT.





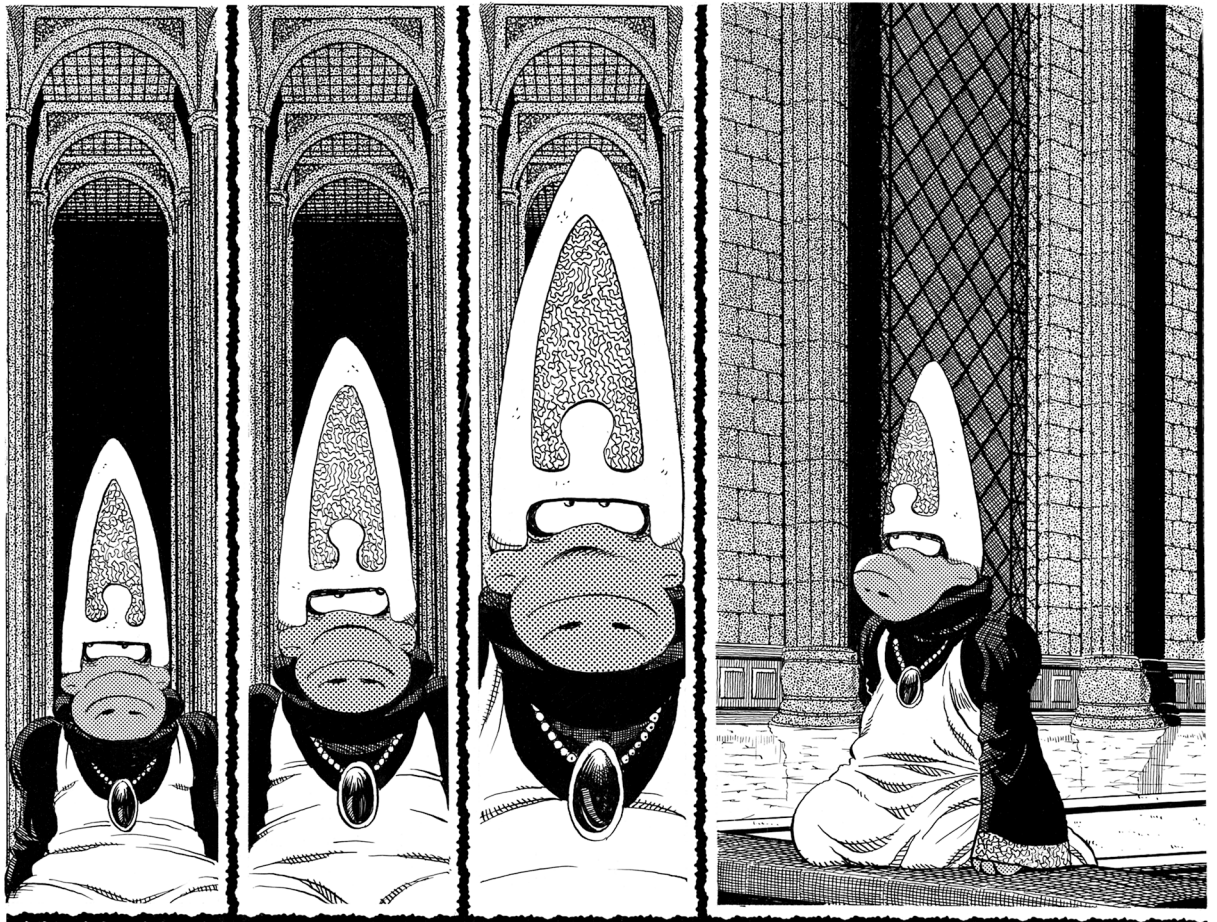


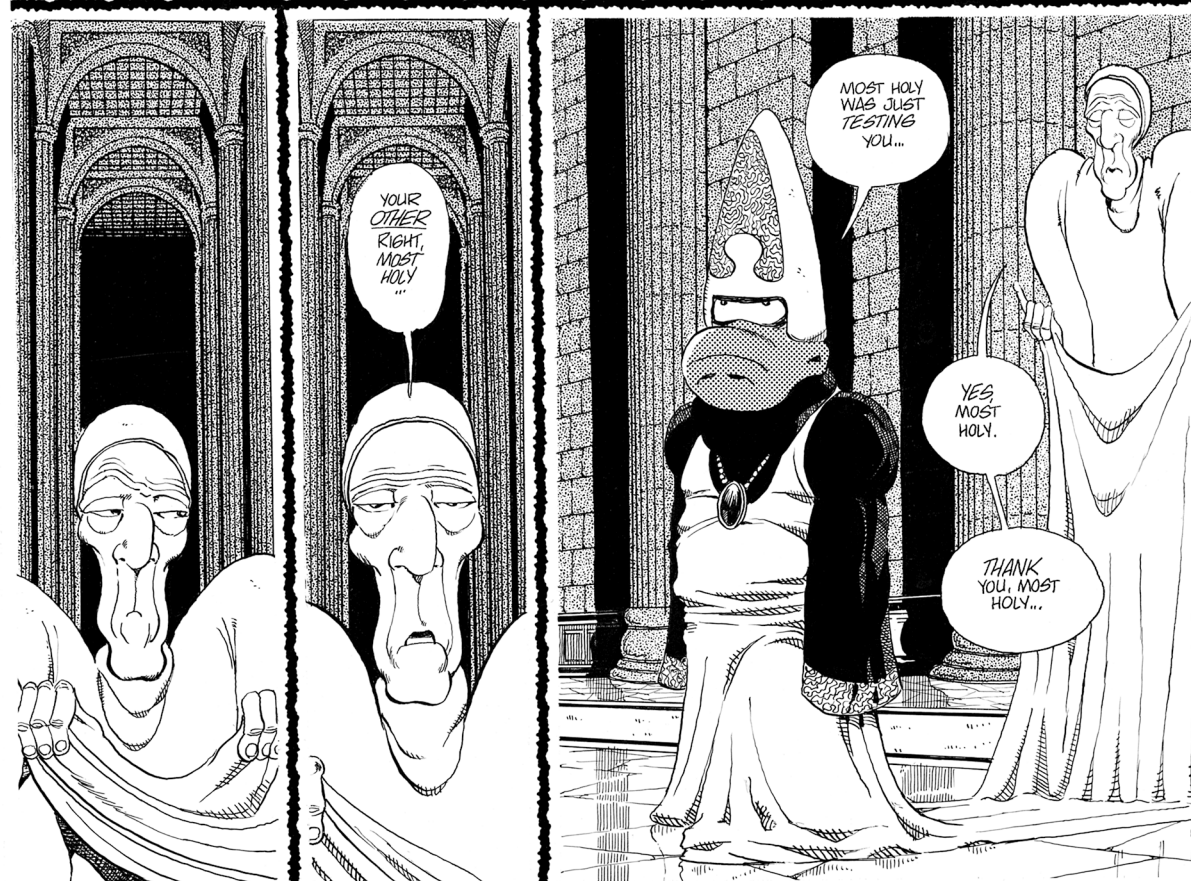
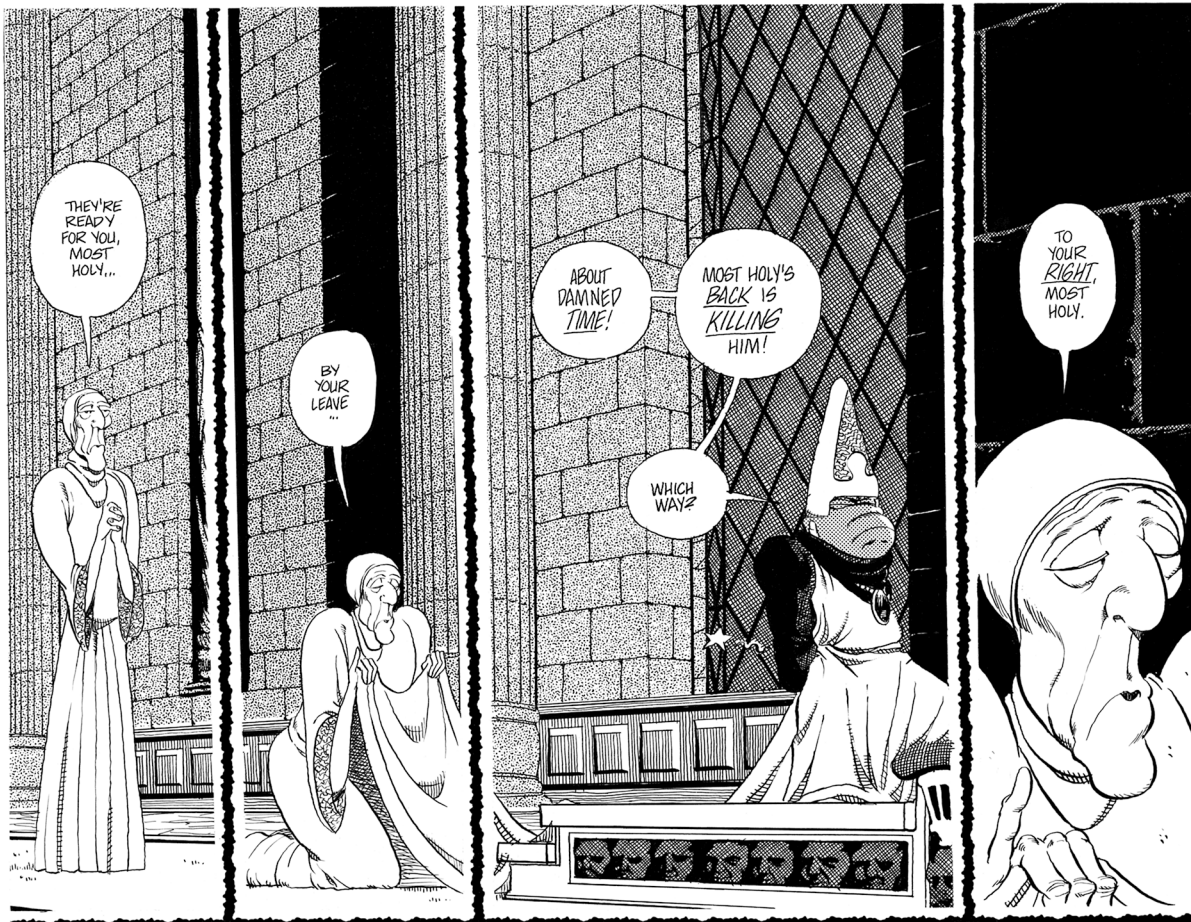


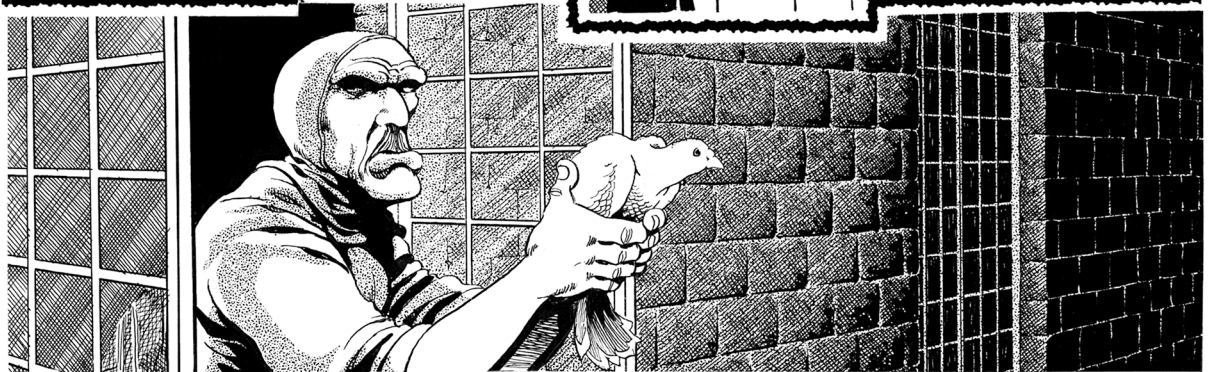
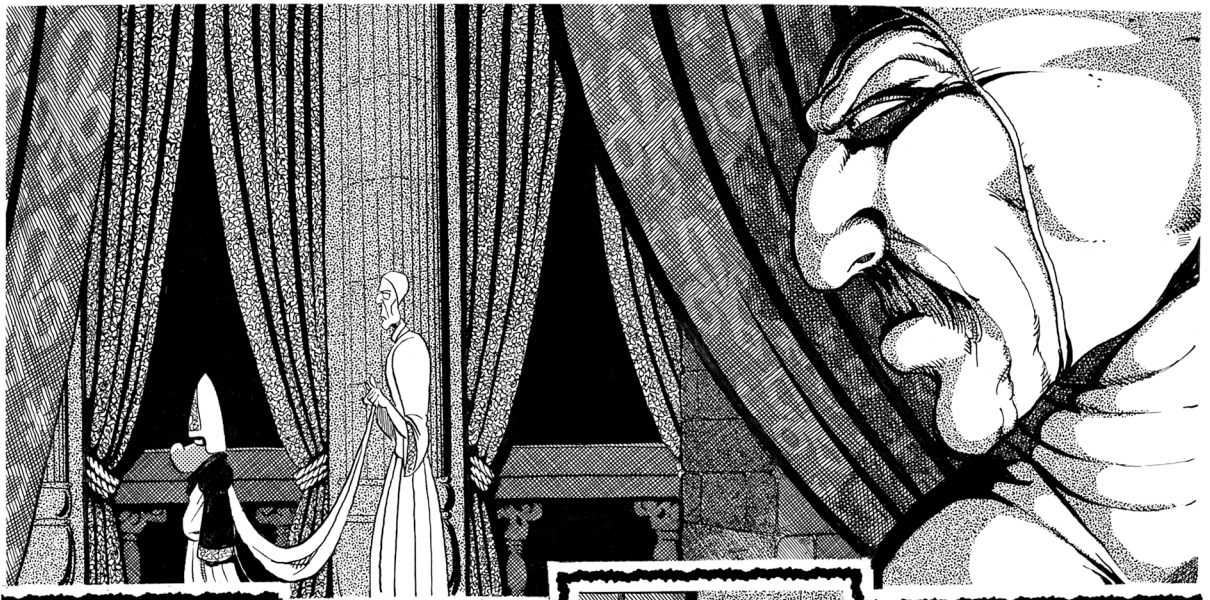
NEXT: THE TRIAL

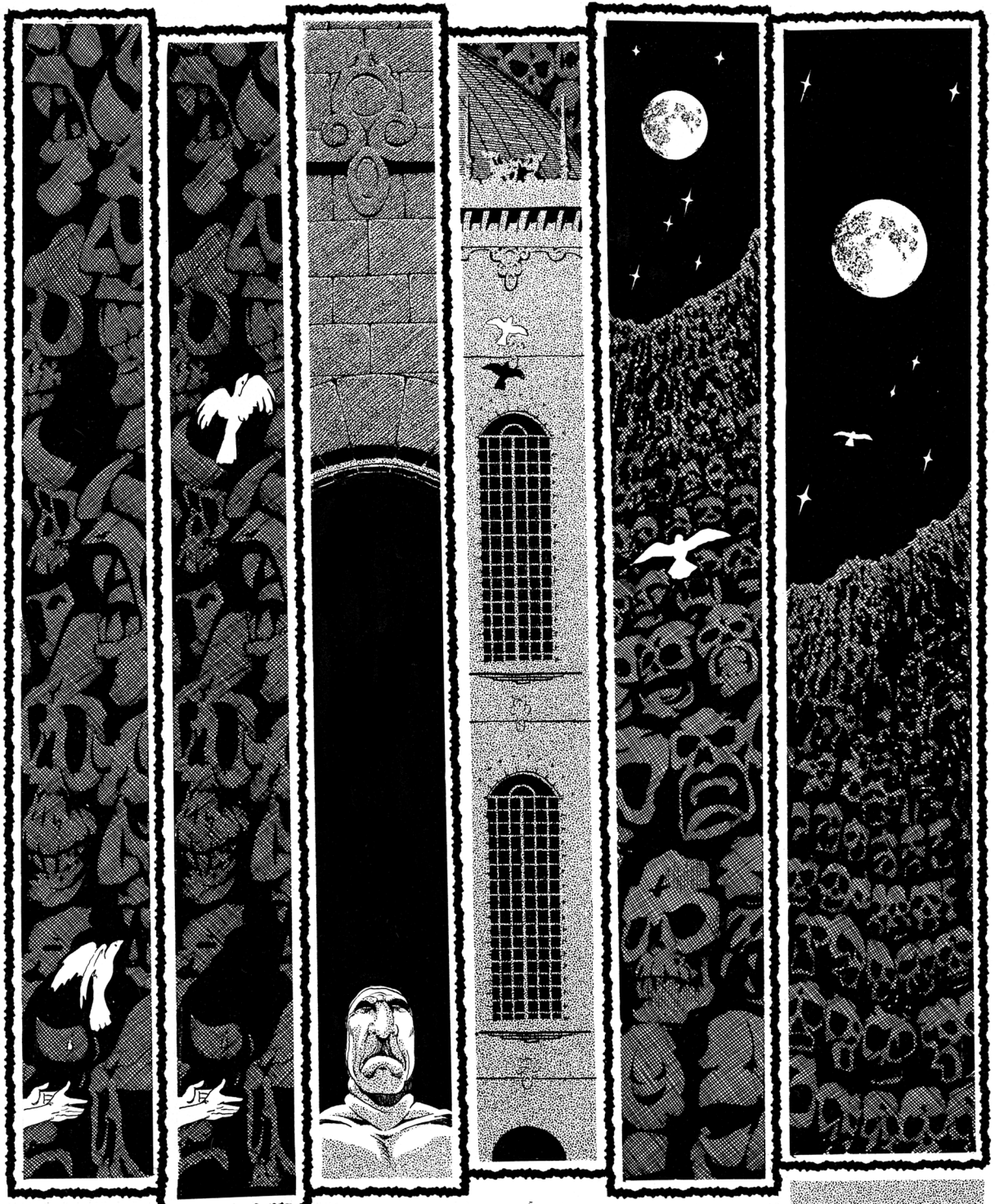
The TRIAL







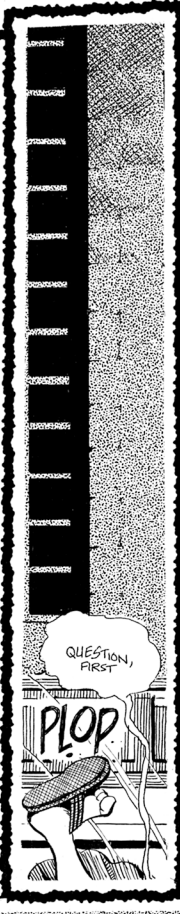
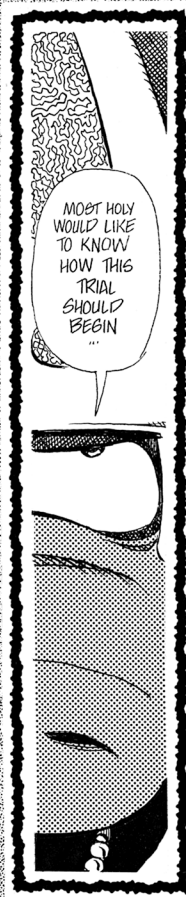
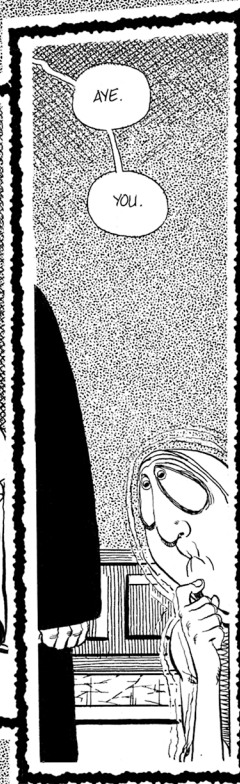


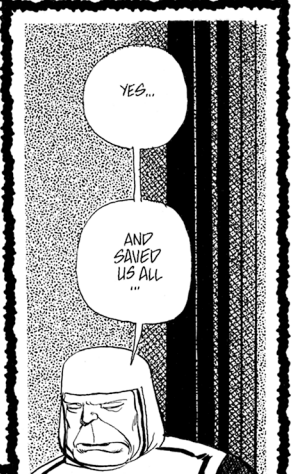
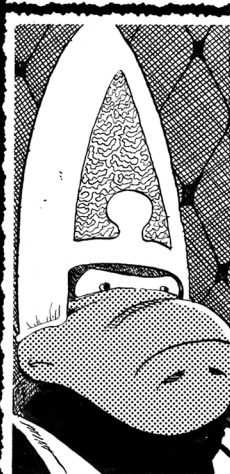
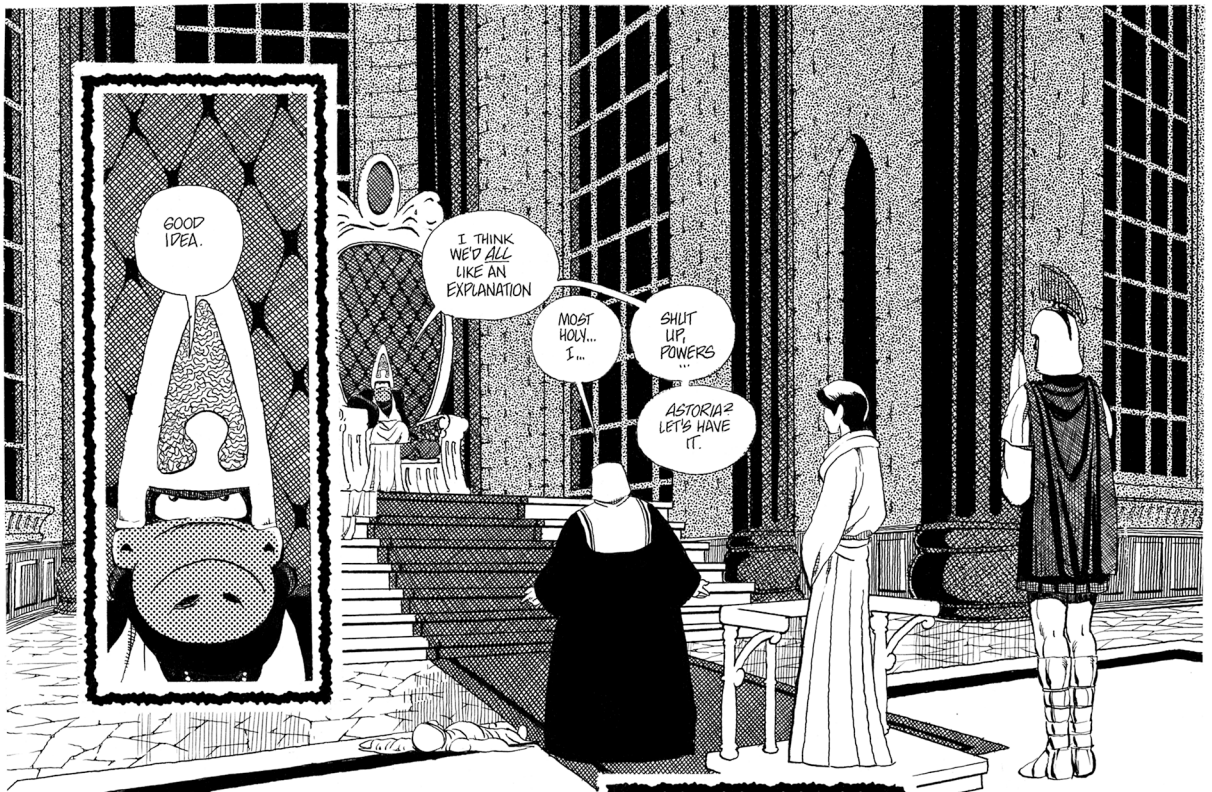




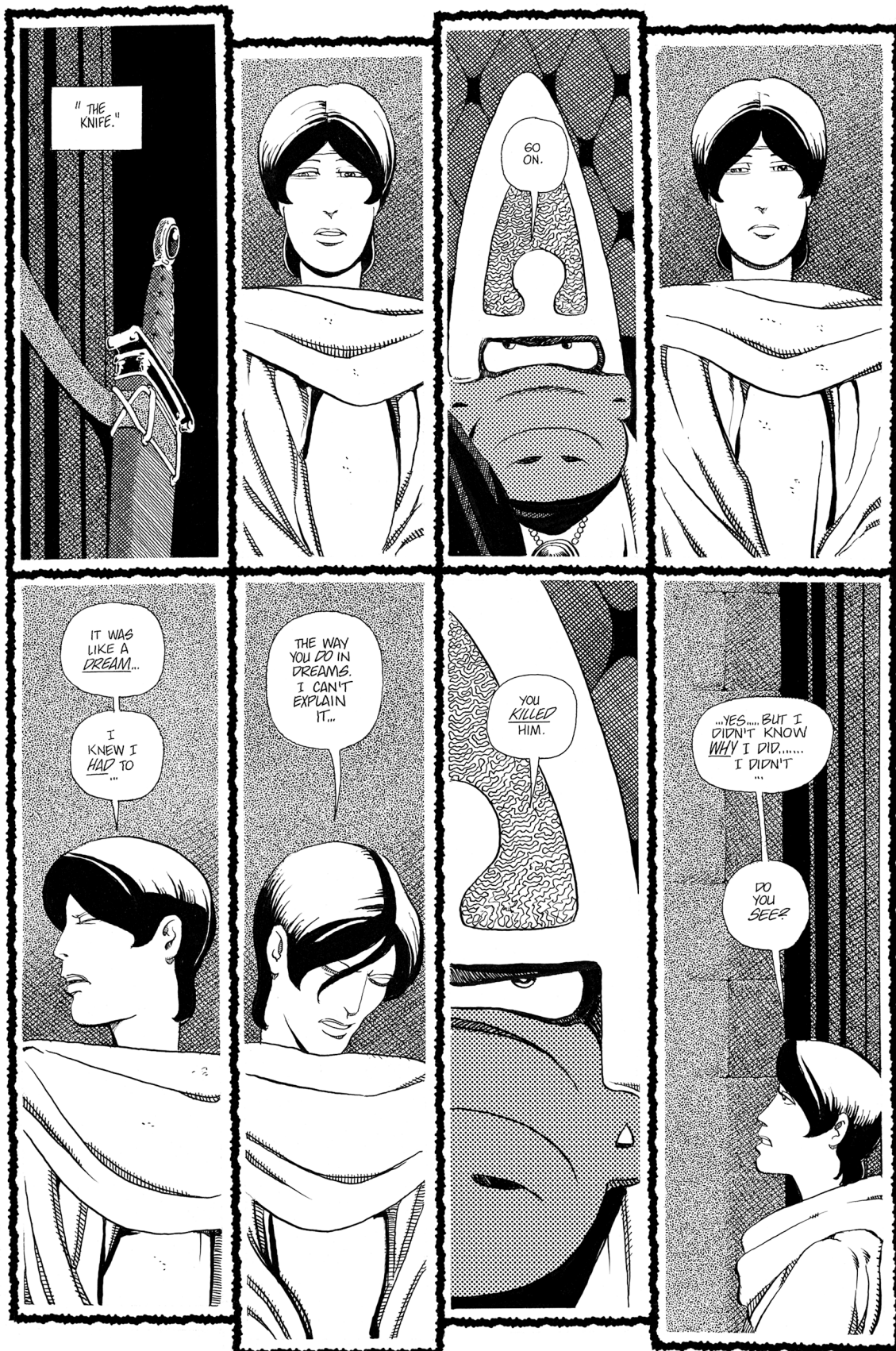












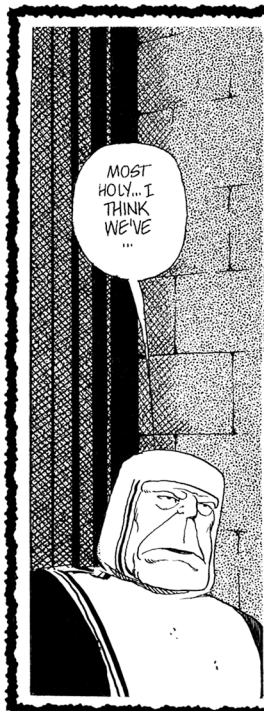


HE HADN'T HURT
ME. I DIDN'T
KNOW WHO HE
WAS. I DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND...

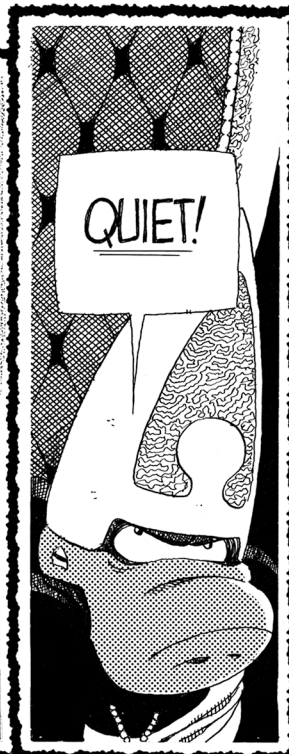
I
DON'T
UNDERSTAND
...

AND
HE
JUST...

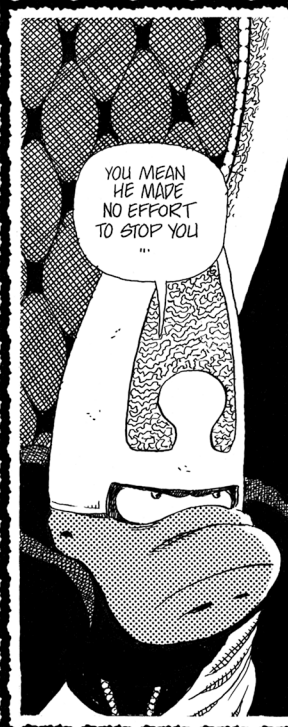
JUST...
SAT
THERE.



MOST
HOLY... I
THINK
WE'VE
...



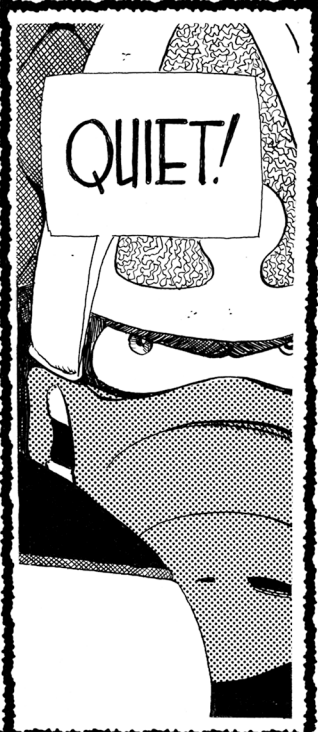
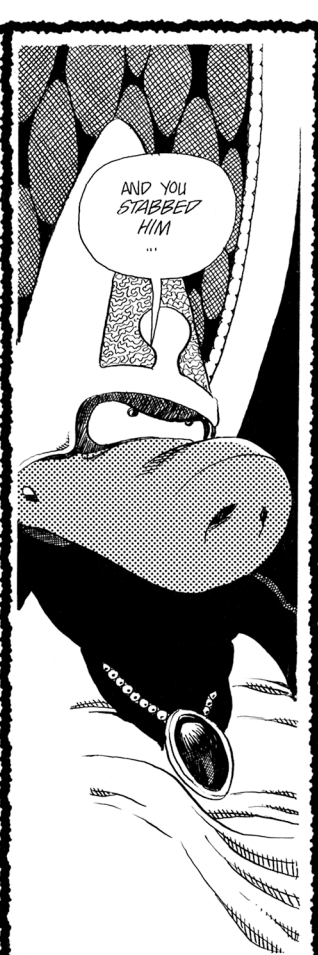
QUIET!

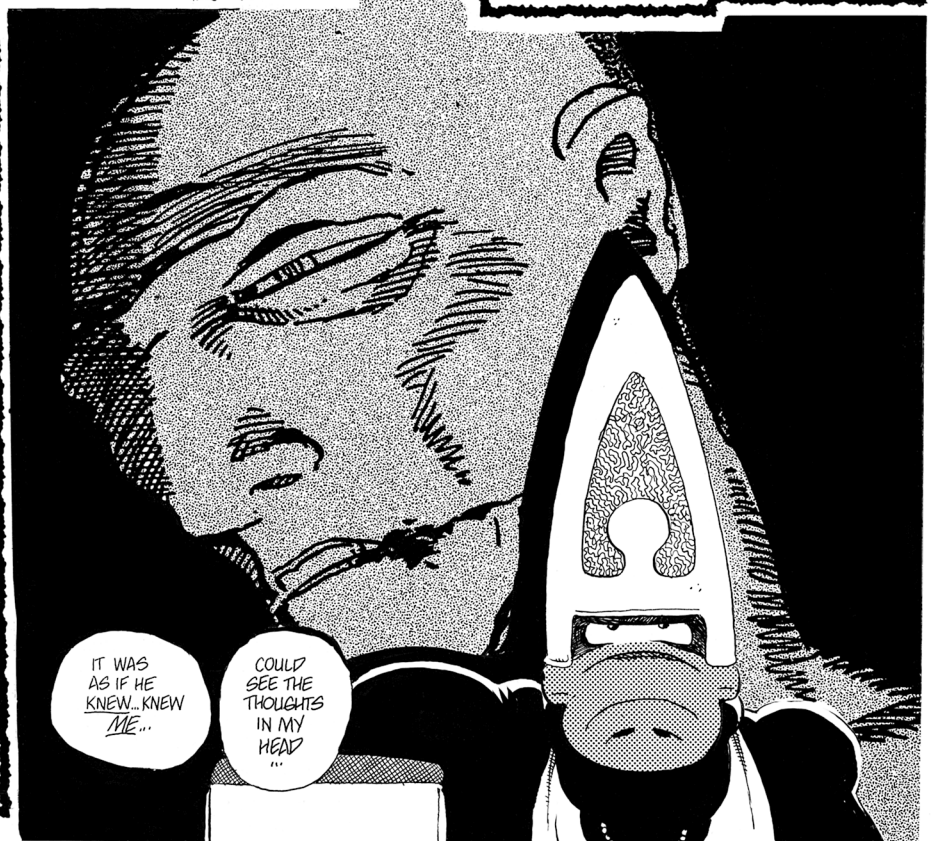
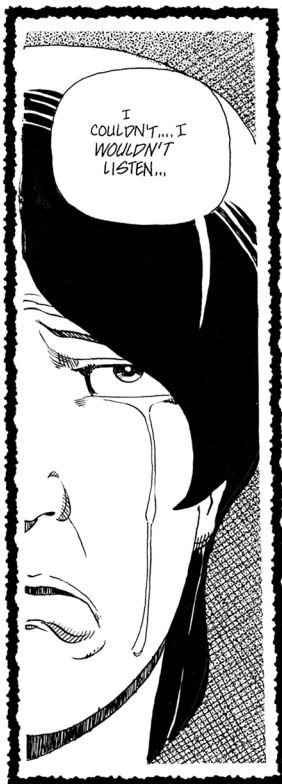


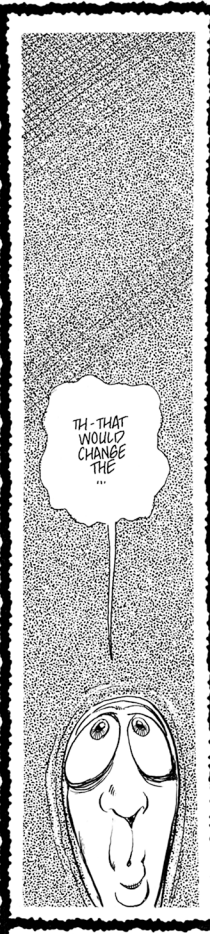
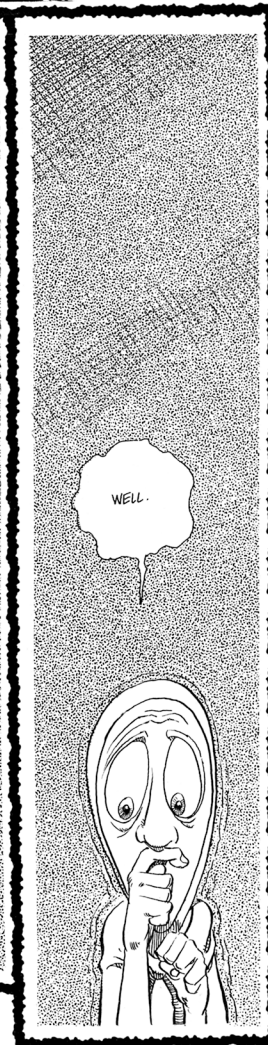
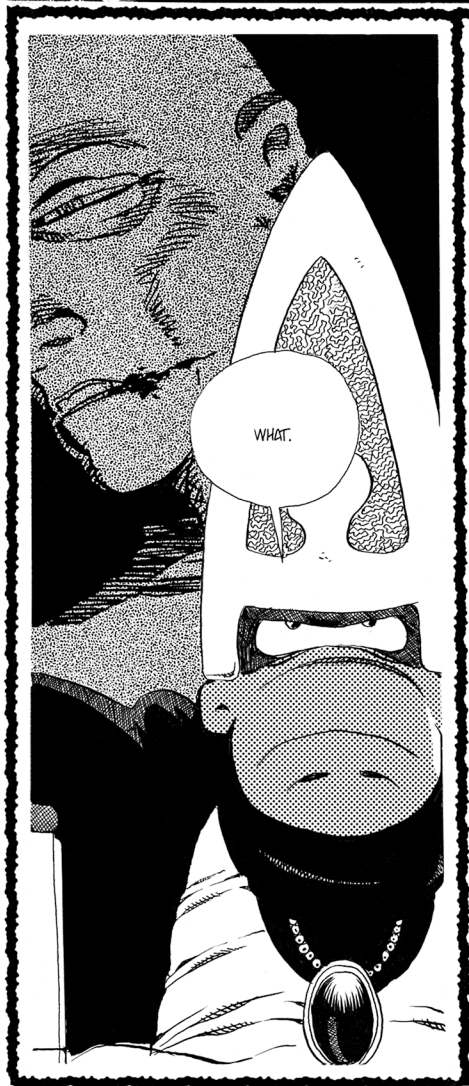
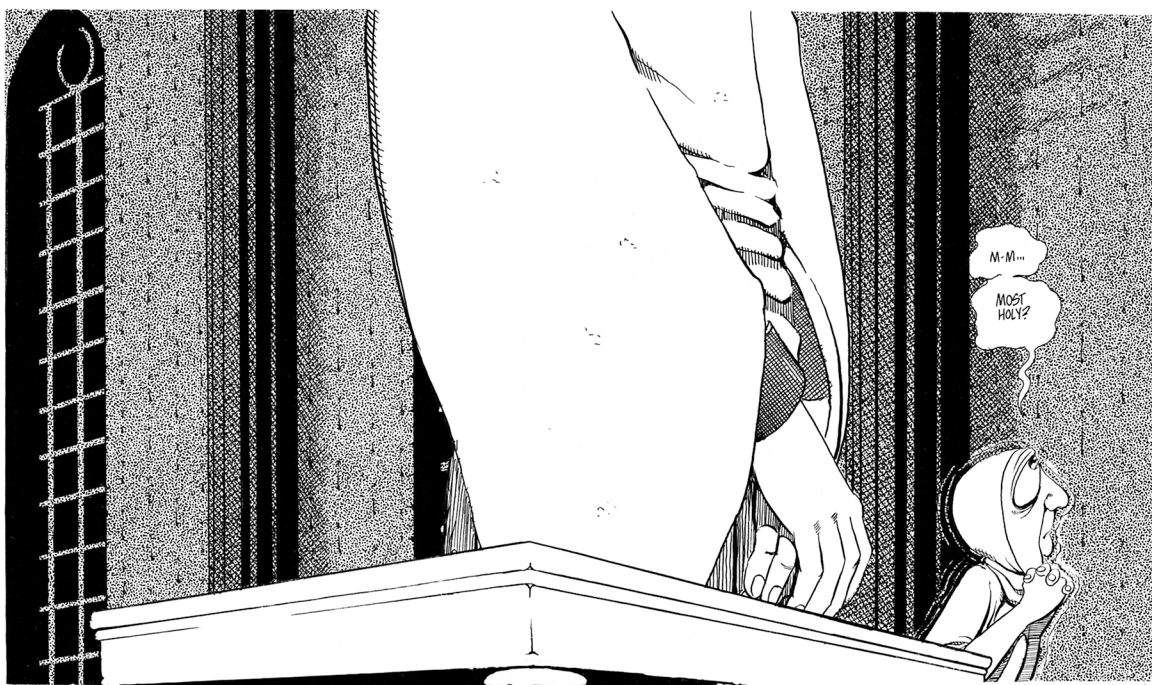
YOU MEAN
HE MADE
NO EFFORT
TO STOP YOU
...



NONE. AND HE
WASN'T SUR-
PRISED THAT I
WAS THERE. IT
WAS AS IF I HAD
BEEN STANDING
IN FRONT OF HIM
ALL ALONG
...







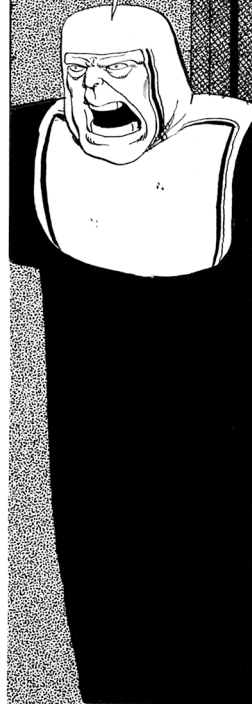
IT
CHANGES
NOTHING!



SHE'S A
HARLOT!
A SLUT! A
SORCERESS



SHE SEEKS
TO DESTROY
US! TO
DESTROY
OUR CHURCH



WE MUST
DESTROY
HER FIRST!
TARIM'S
WILL BE
DONE!!



DESTROY YOU?
DESTROY YOU,
POWERS?



THERE IS NO
NEED TO DESTROY
YOU ...

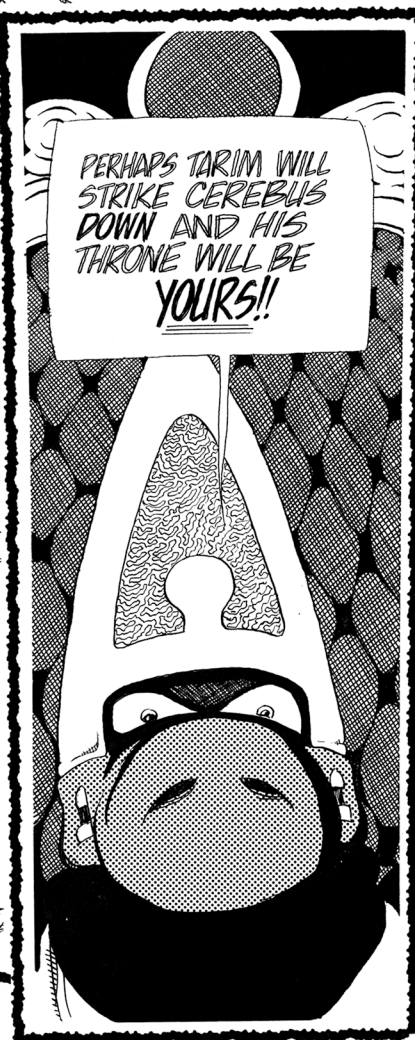
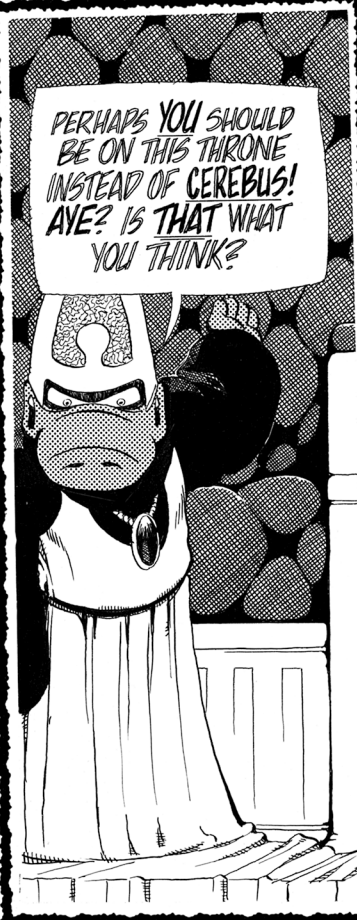
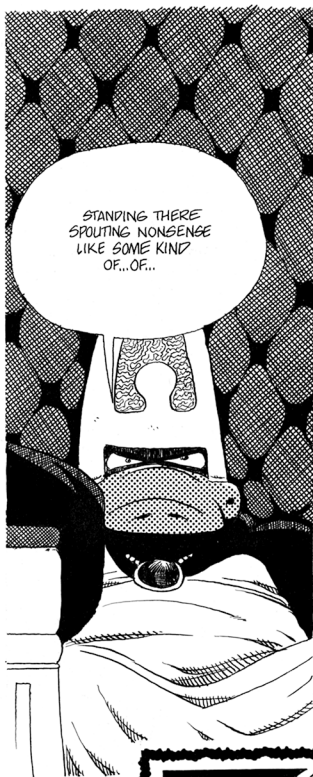
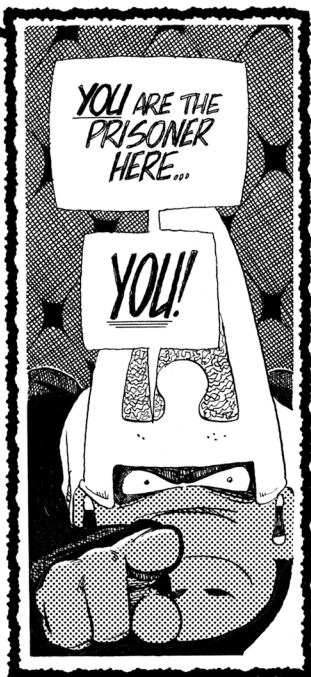


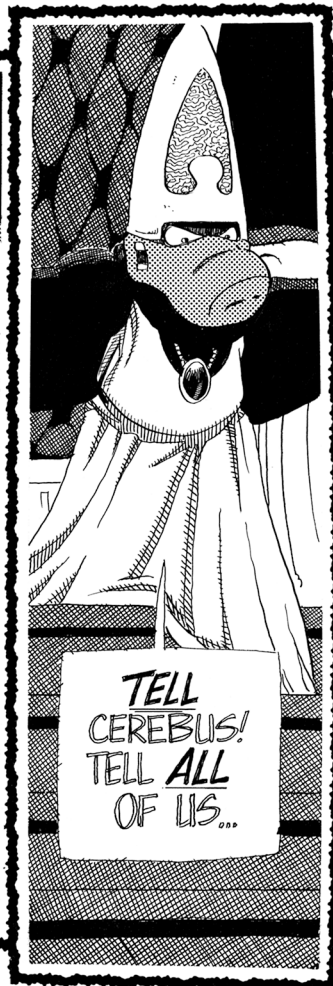
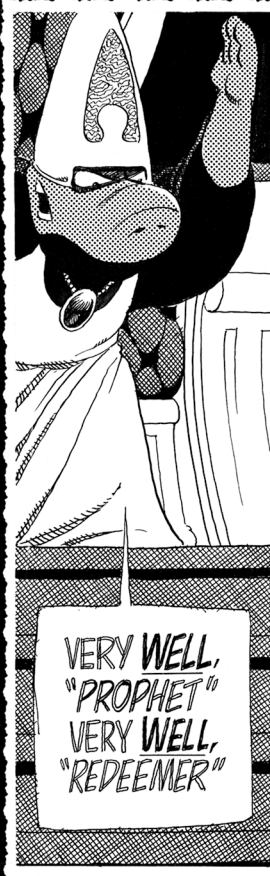
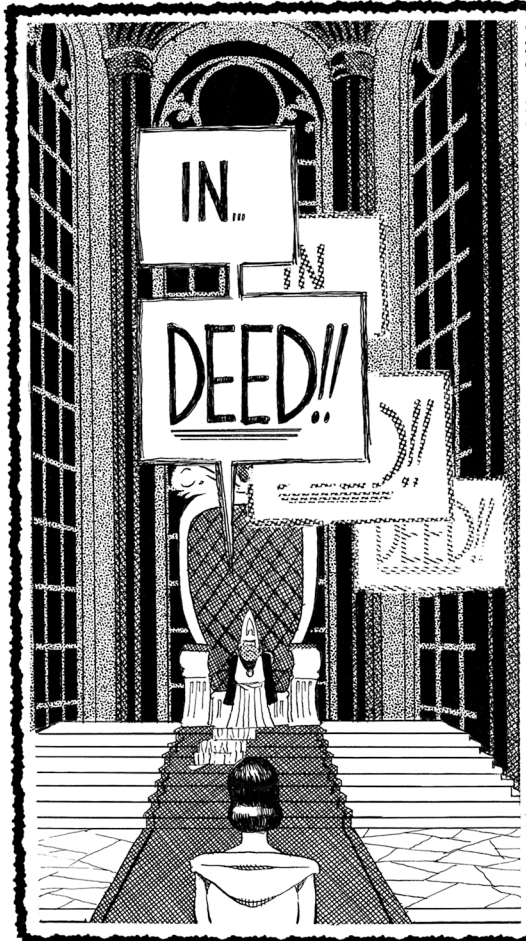
YOUR CHURCH
WILL DESTROY
ITSELF AS IT
HAS ALWAYS
DONE-- AS
IT...

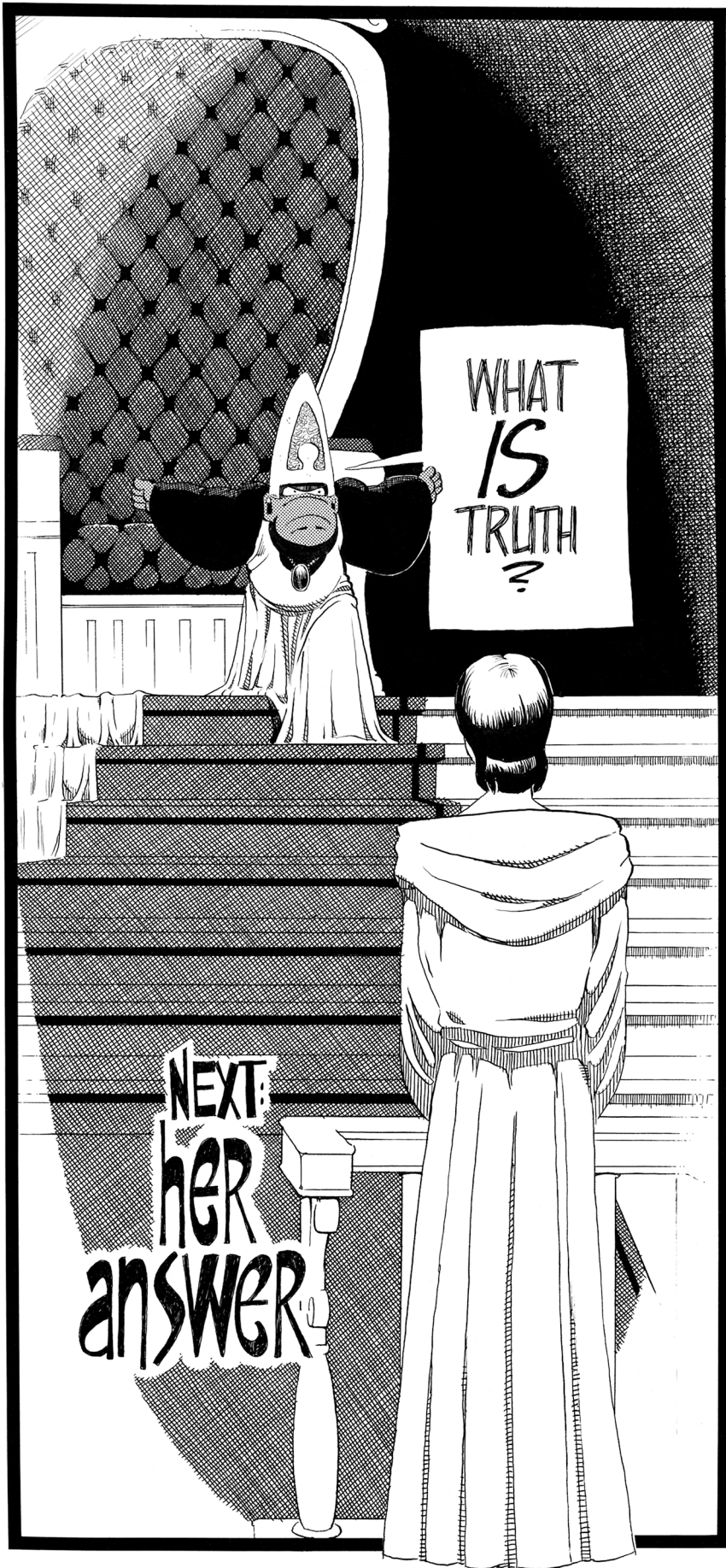


YOU
THINK
SO?



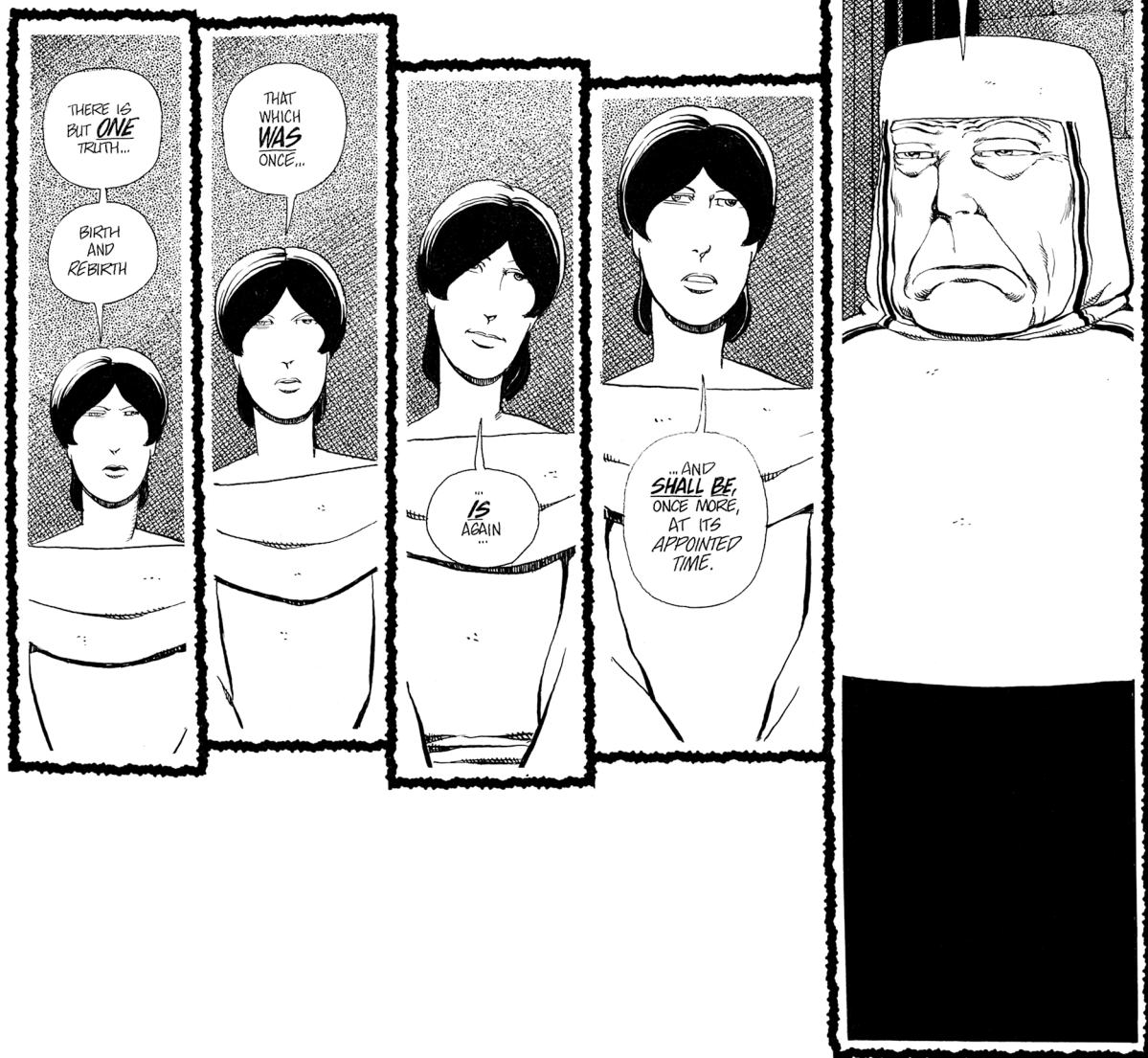


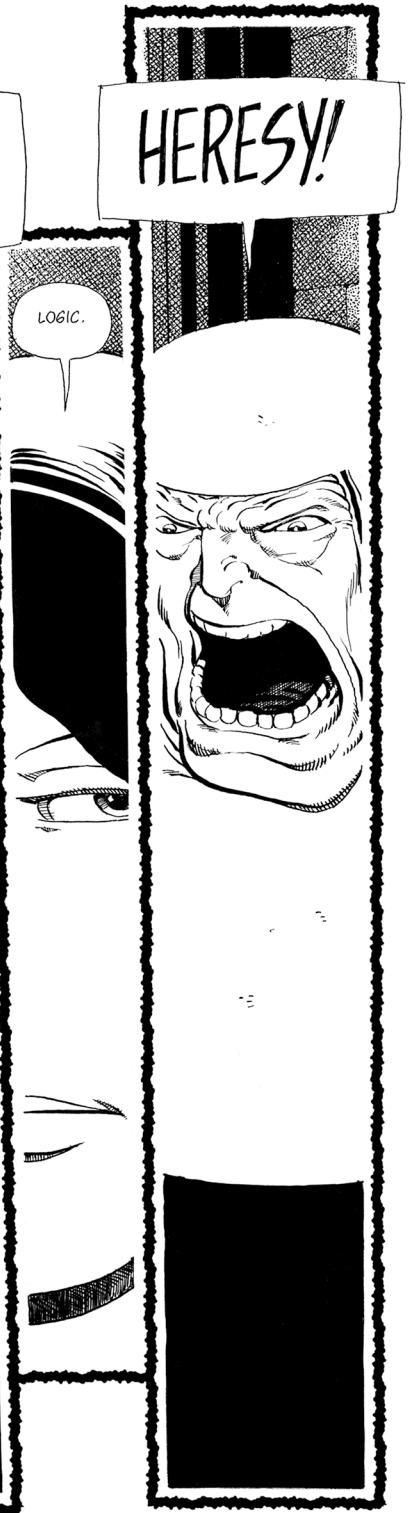
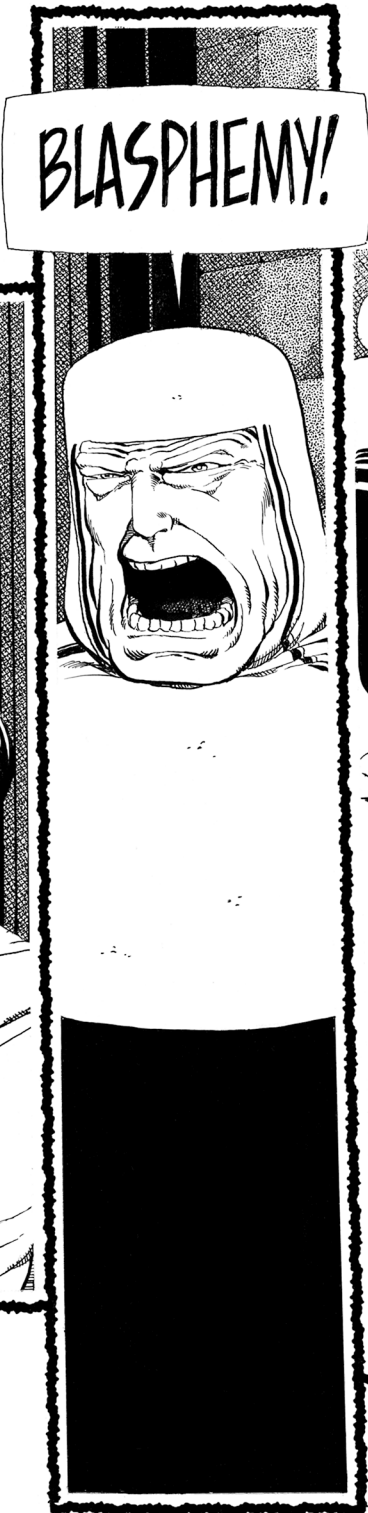
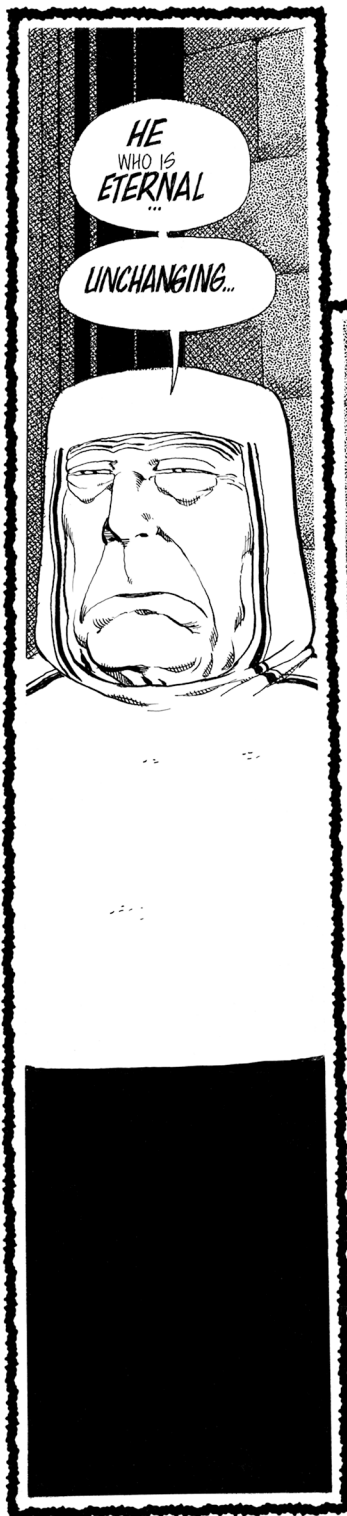


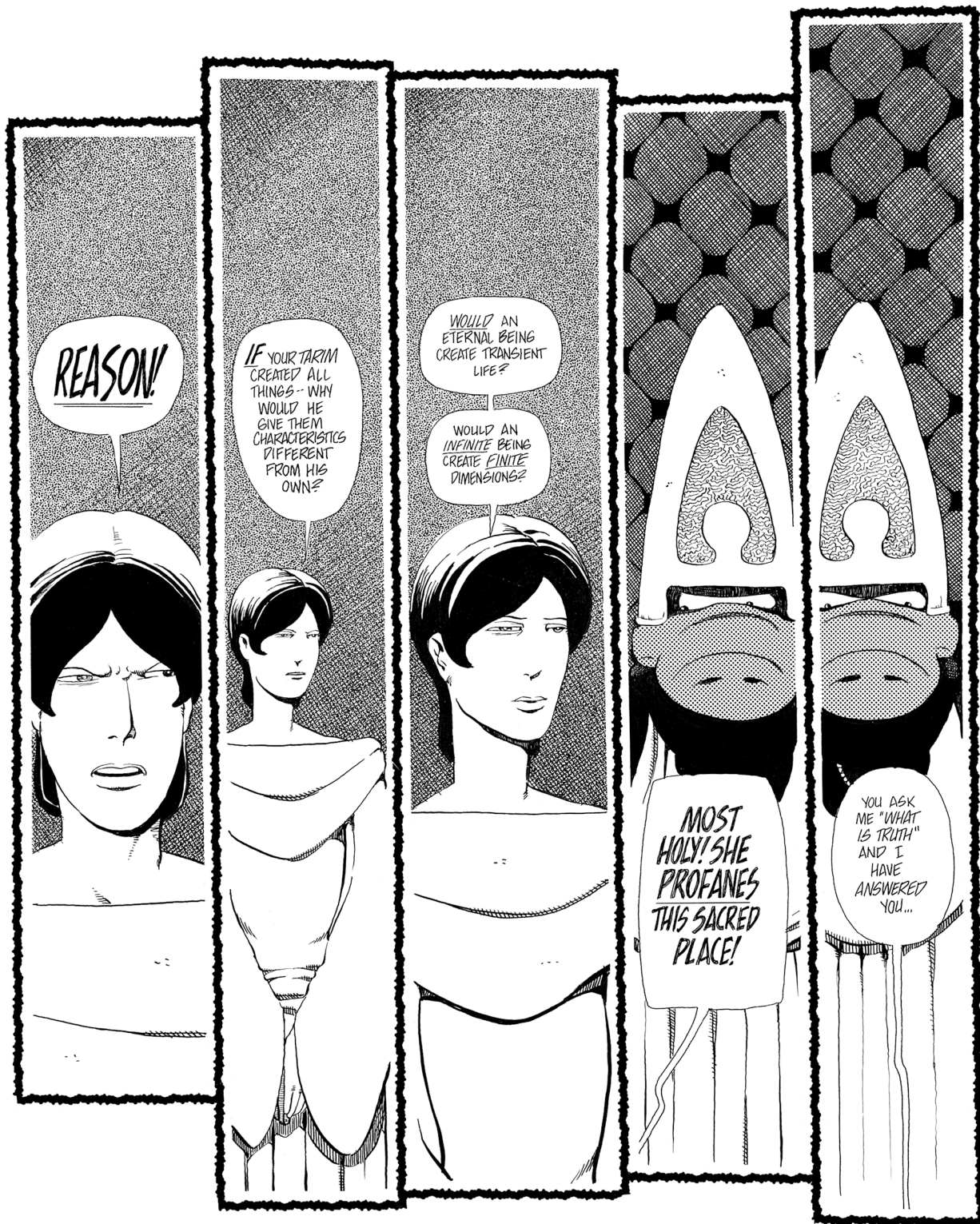


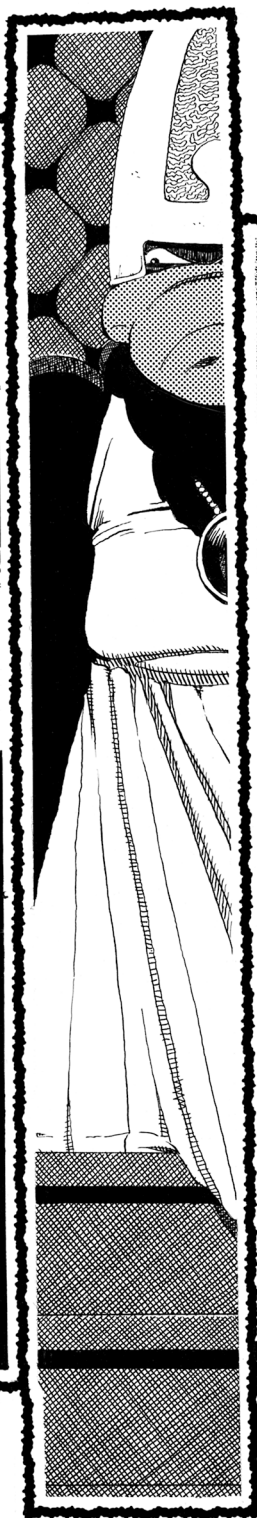
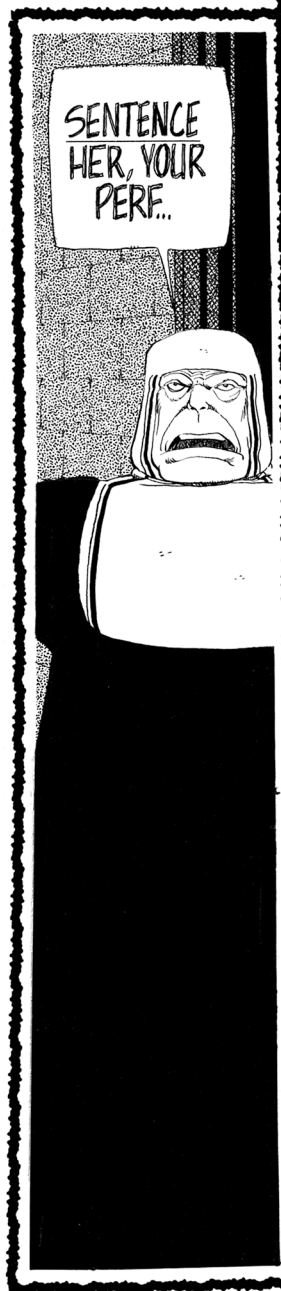
accurate/
inexplicable

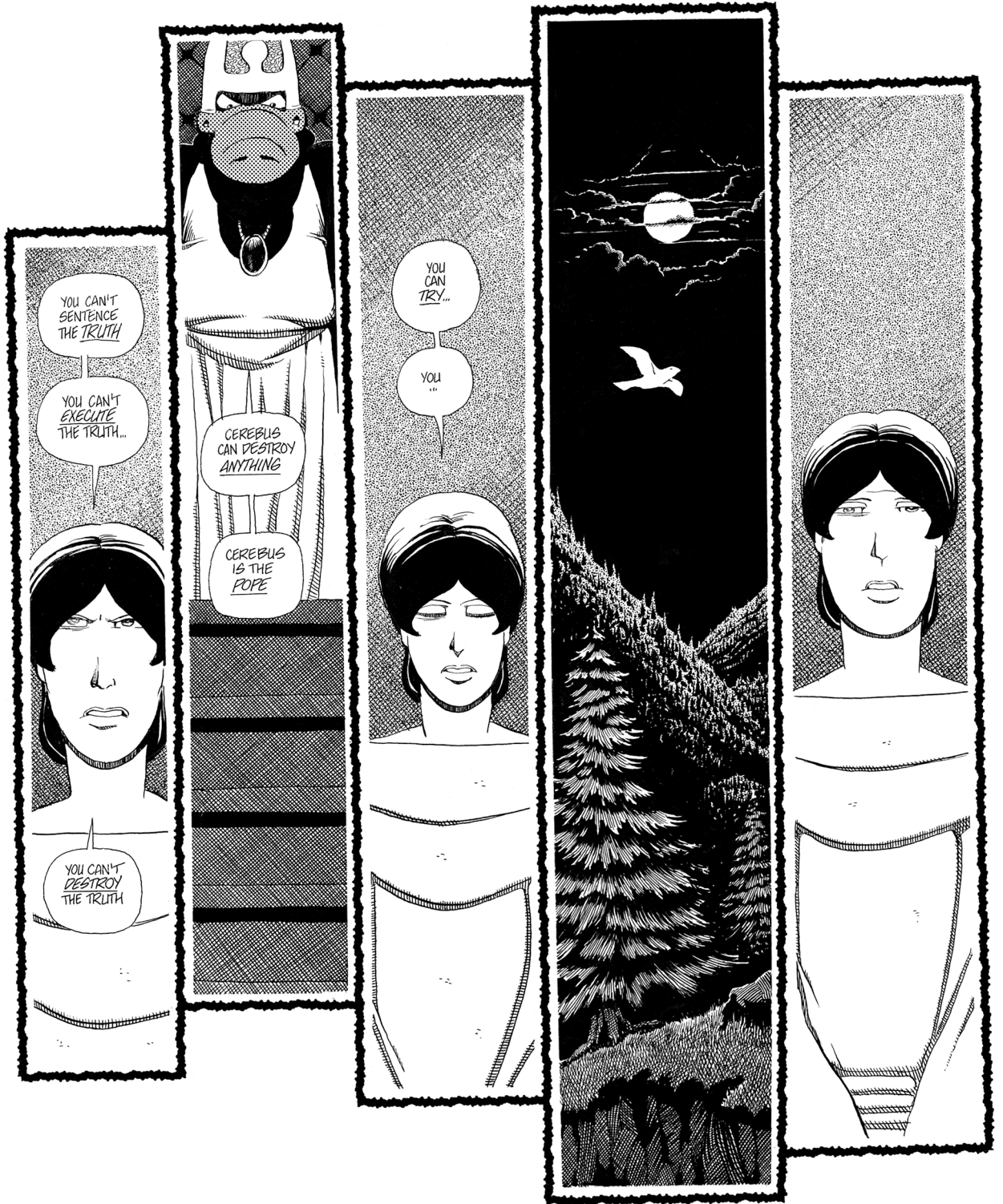


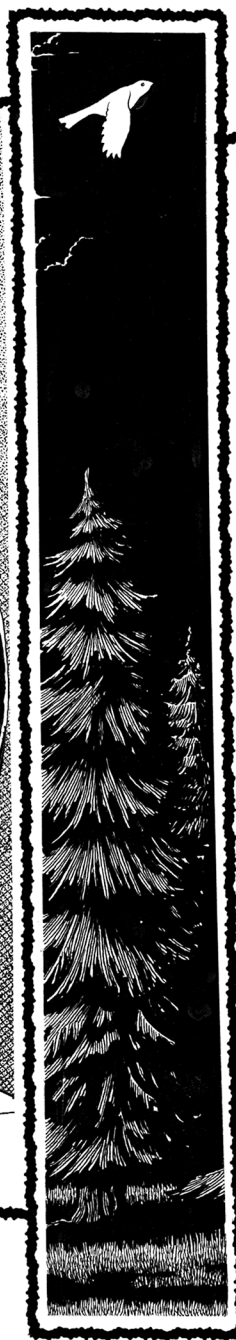
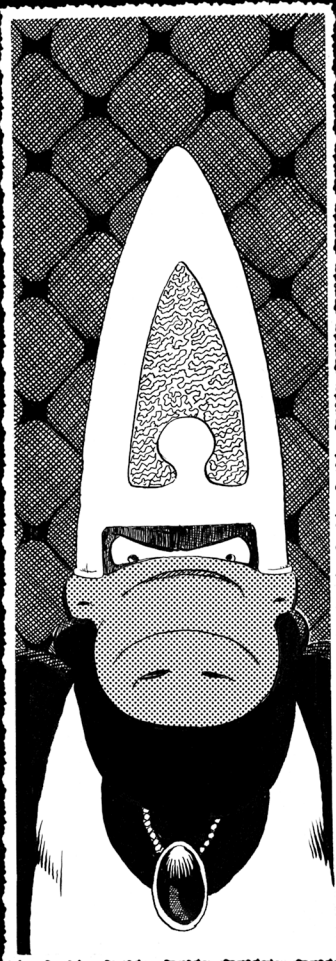


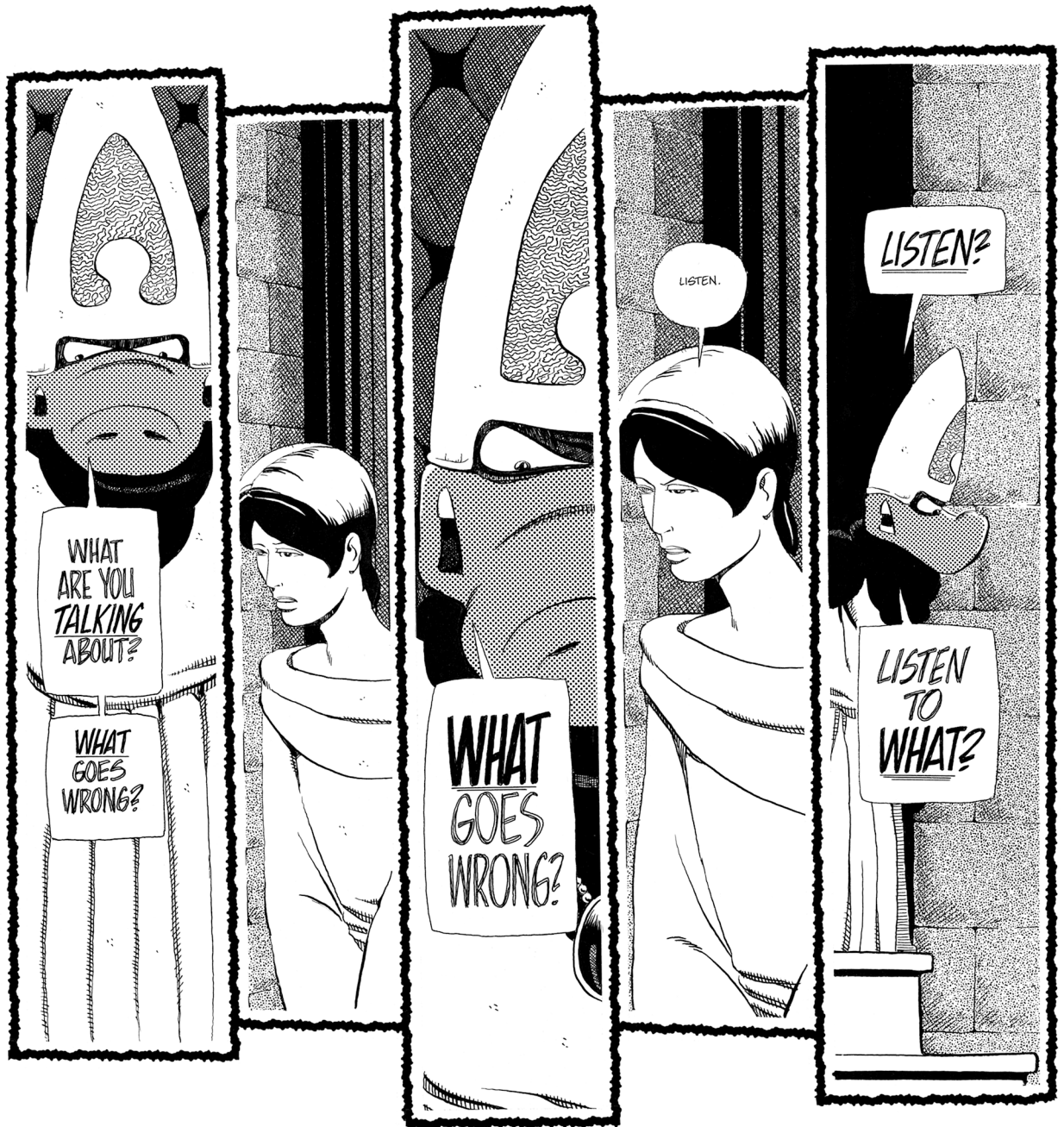


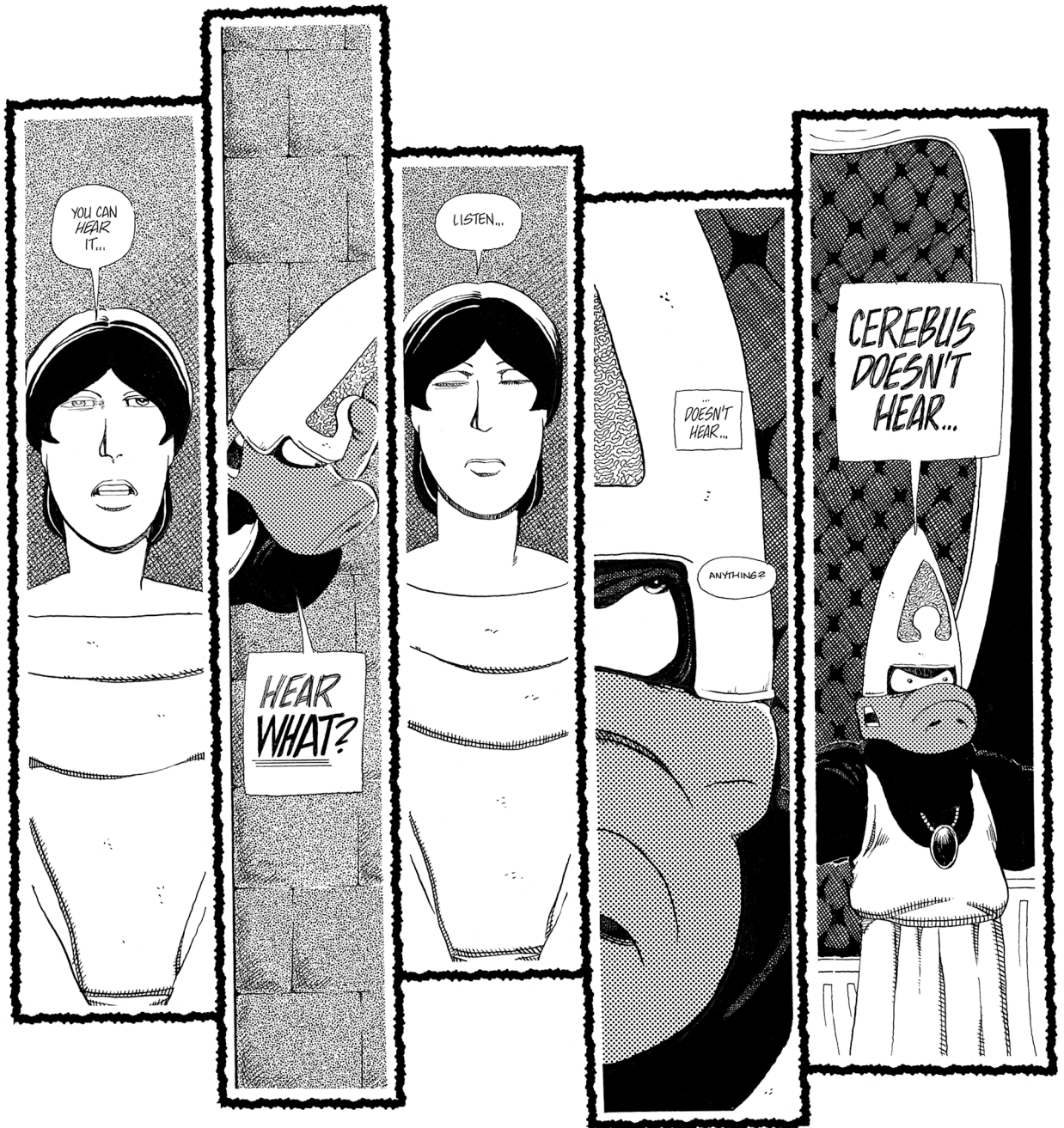


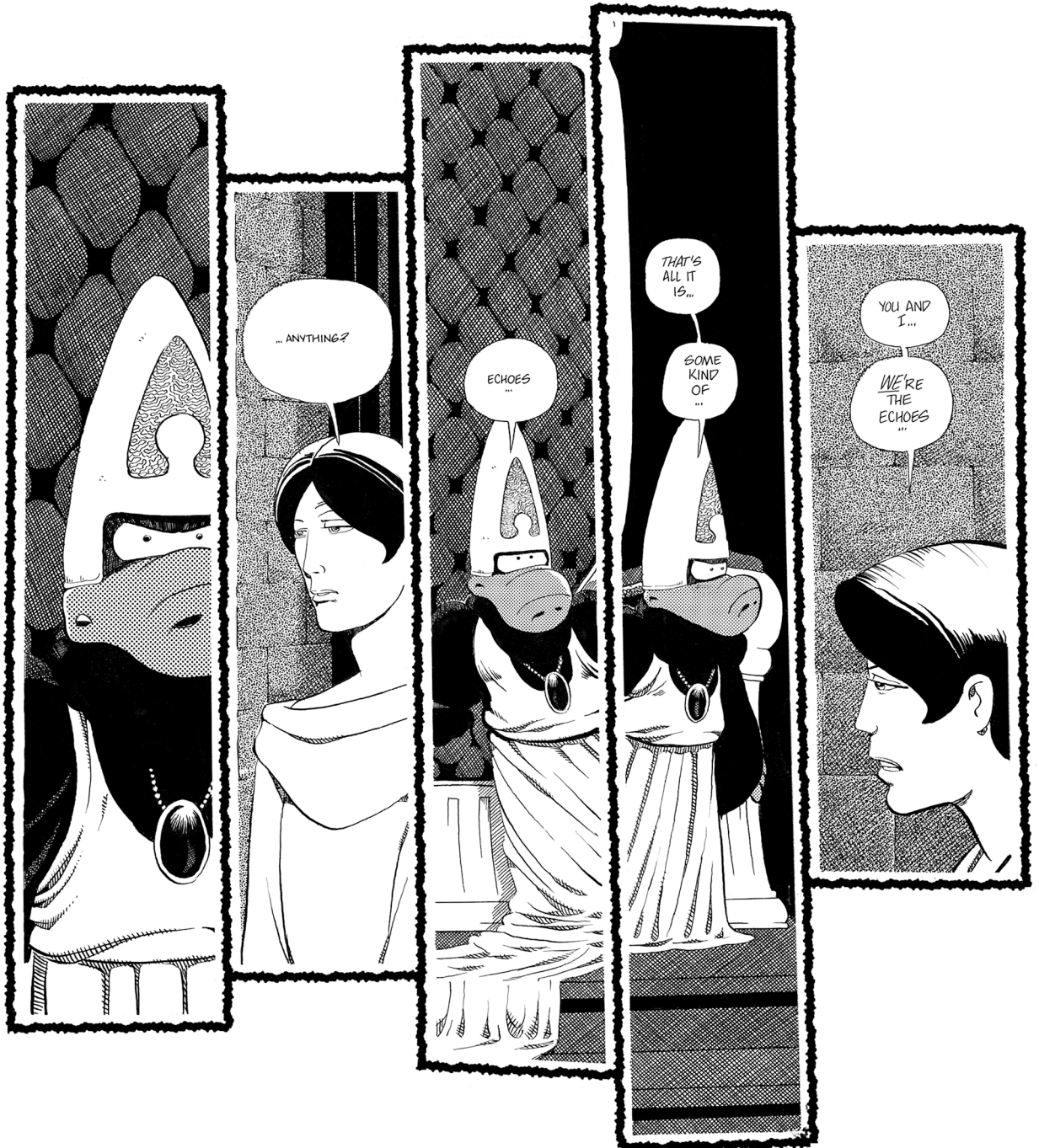


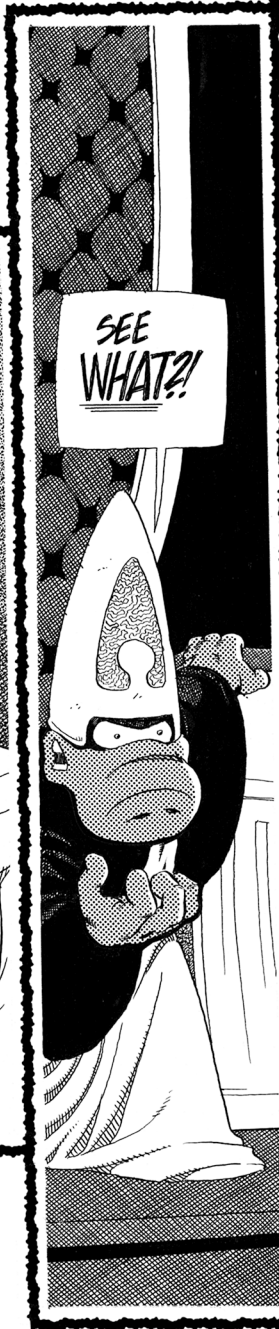
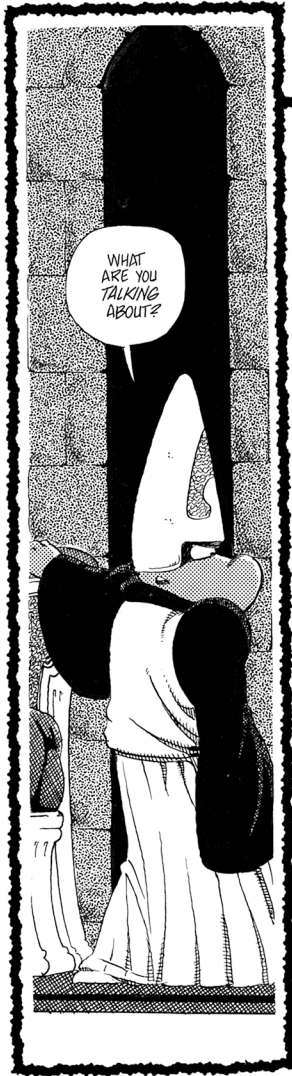


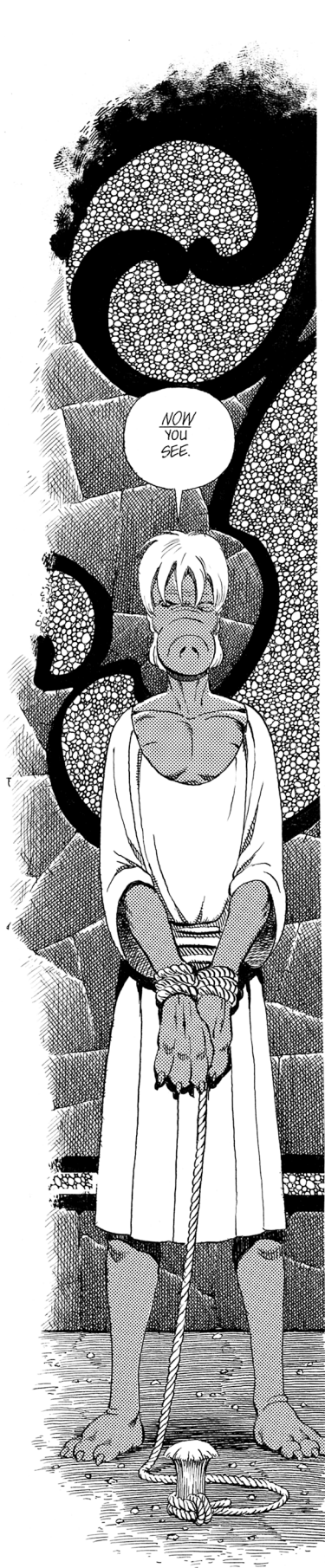














IT'S SOME
KIND
OF...

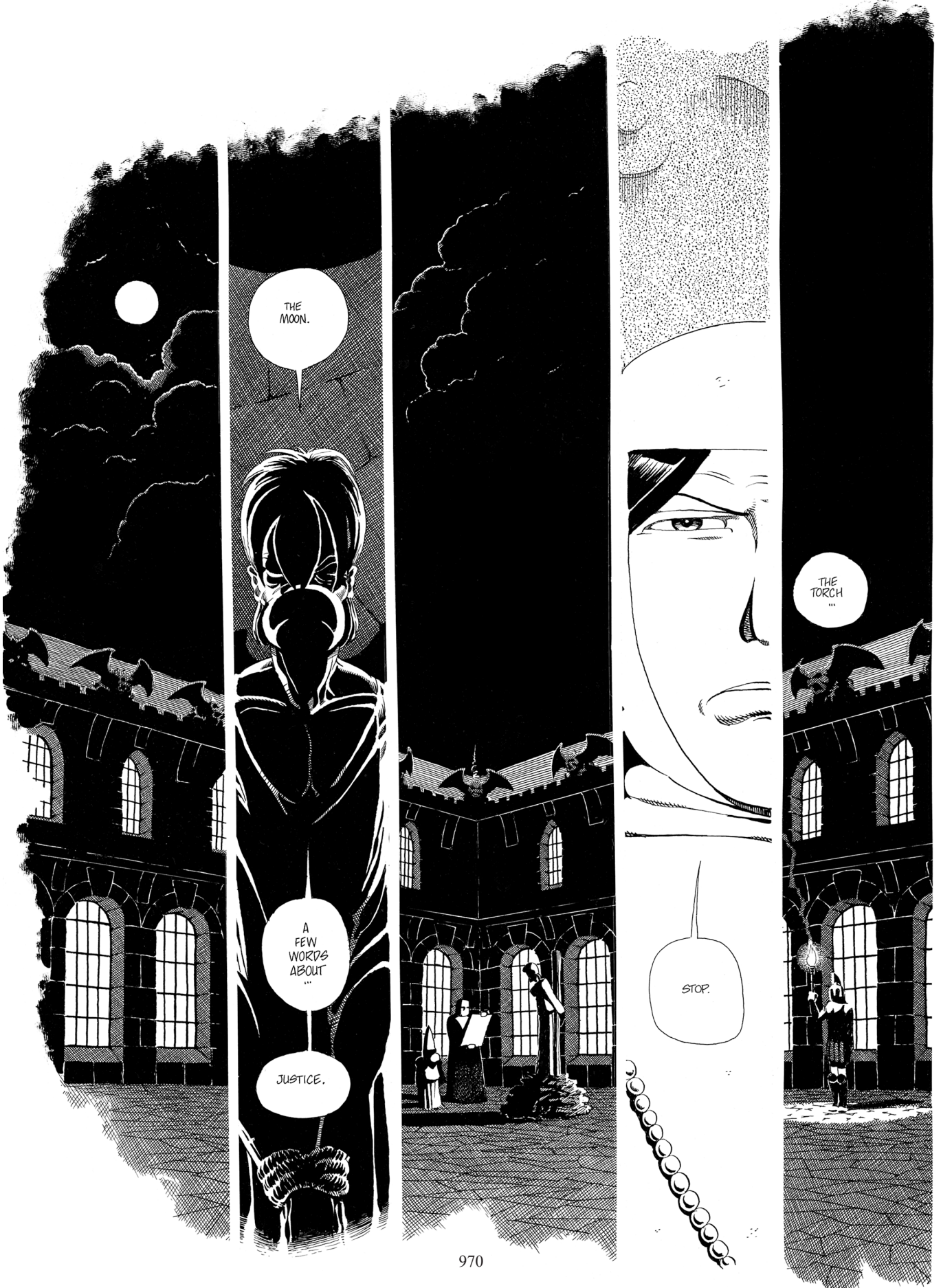
...TRICK?

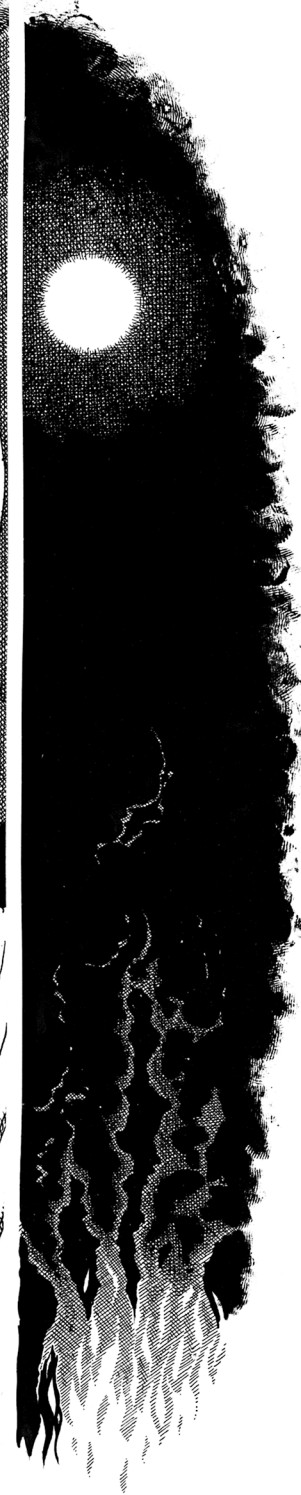
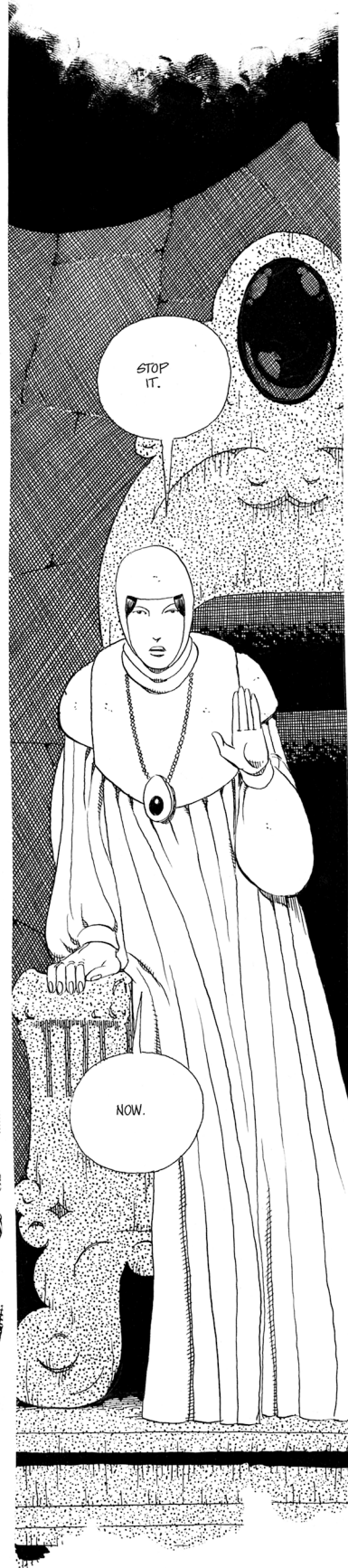
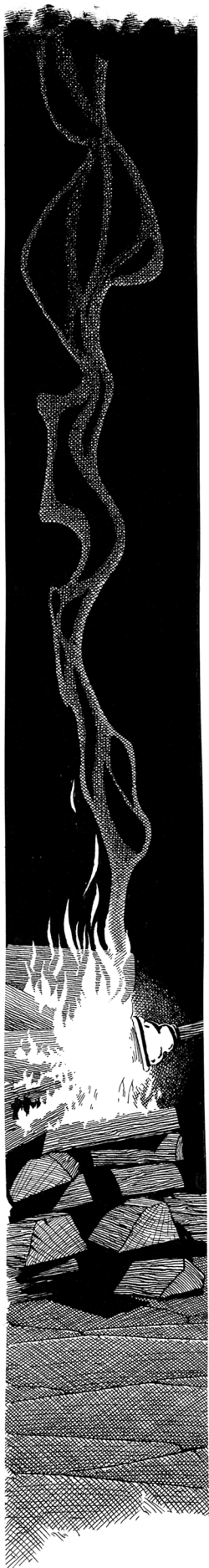
YOU
KNOW
BETTER
THAN
THAT

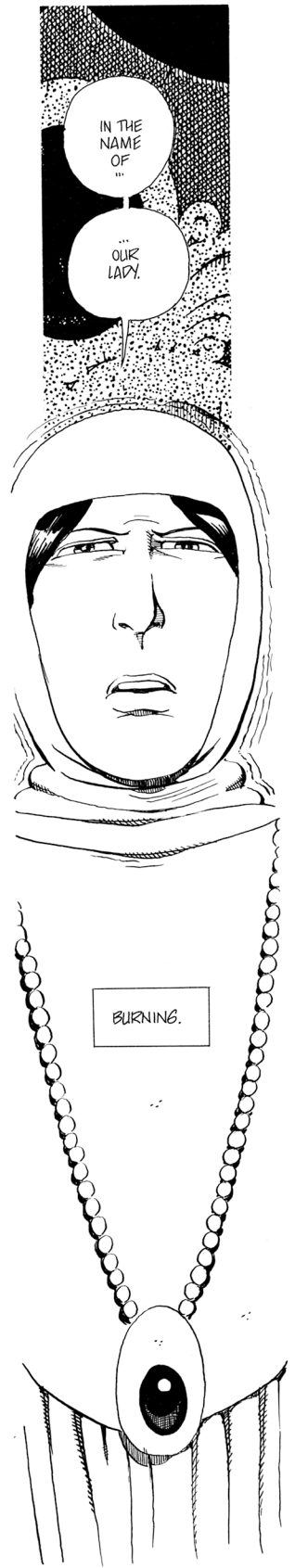
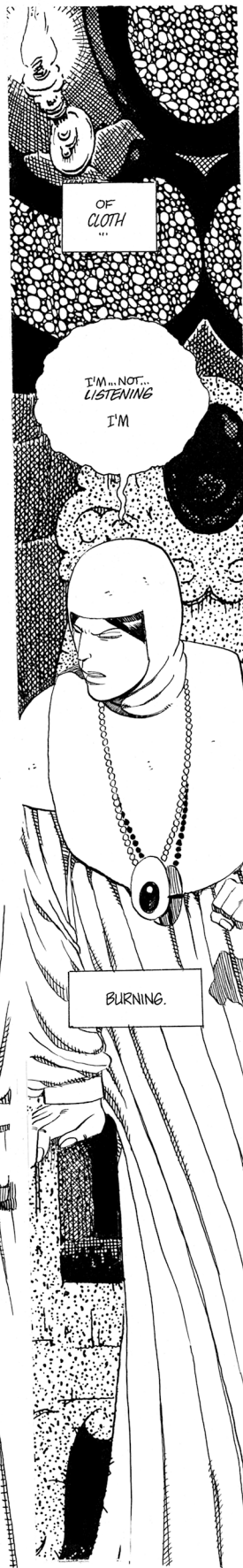
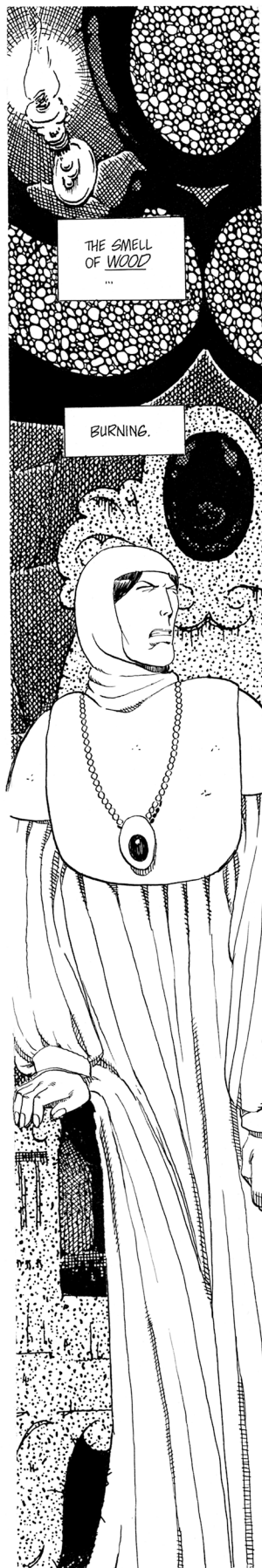
YOU
REMEMBER
HOW IT ENDS
AS WELL

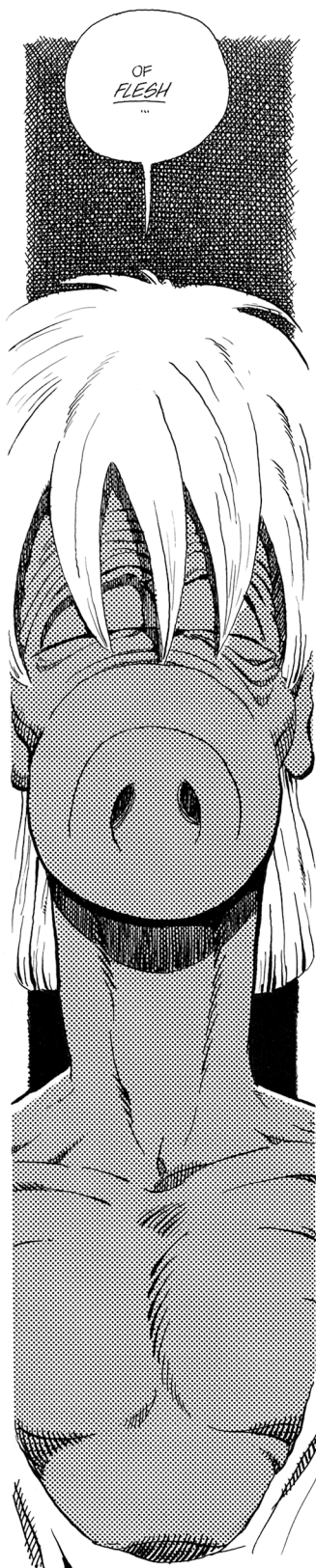
HOW IT
ALWAYS
ENDS

DON'T
YOU?



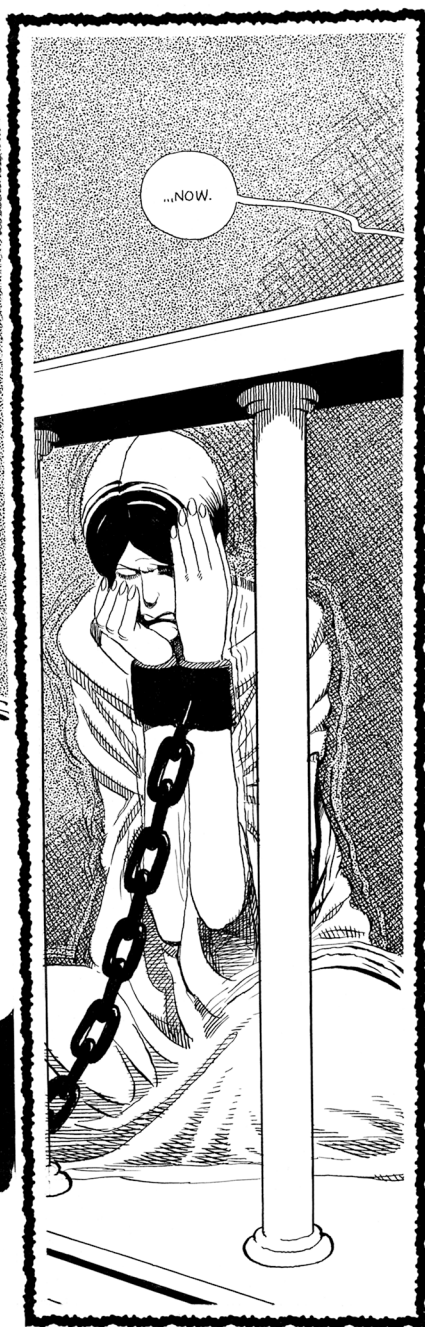
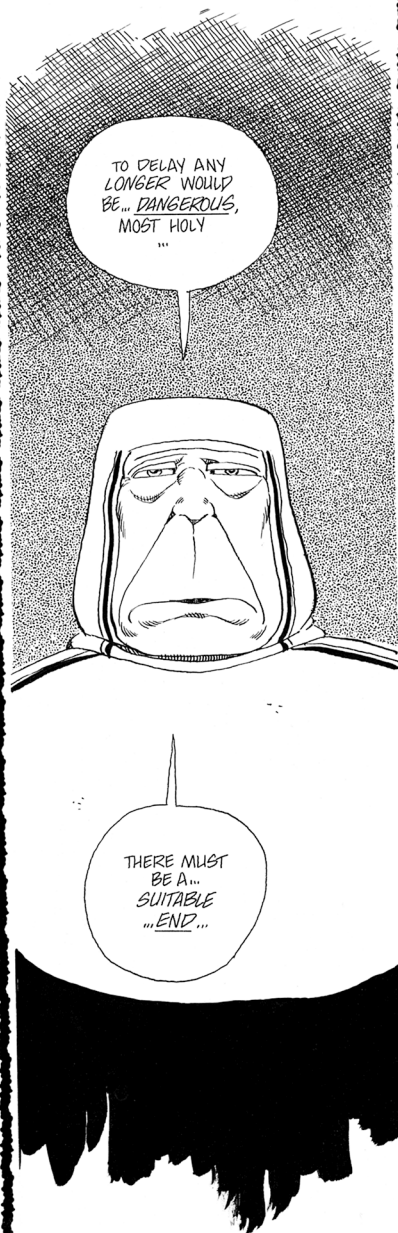










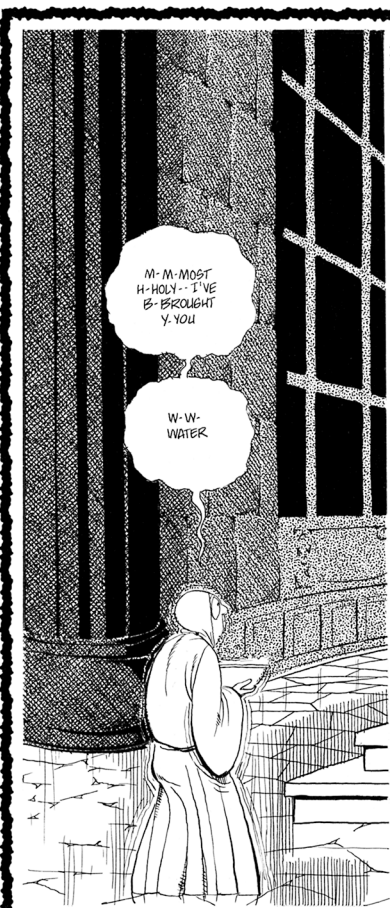


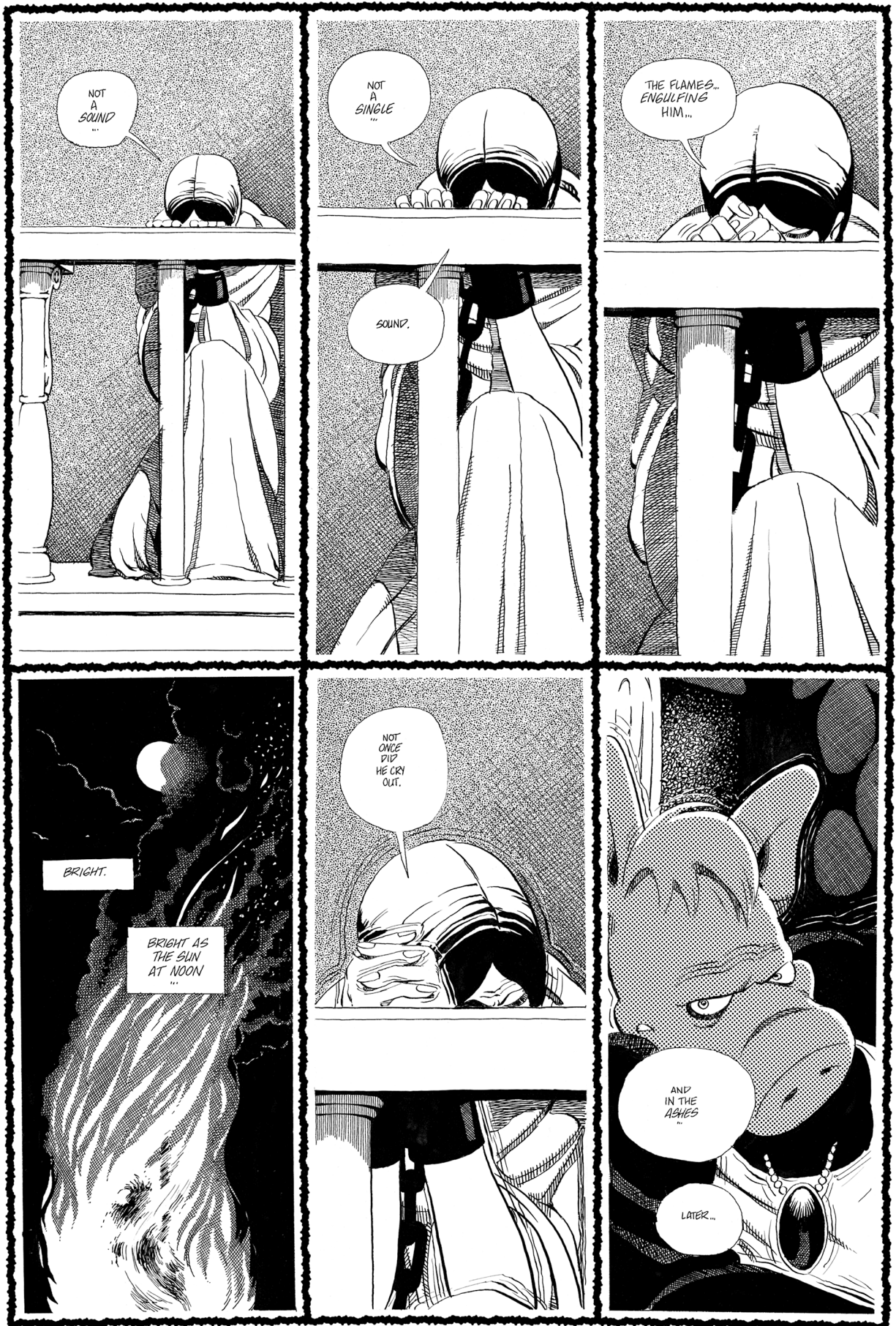
NEXT: TRIAL'S END



ENDGAME









HIS...

...HIS
HEART.



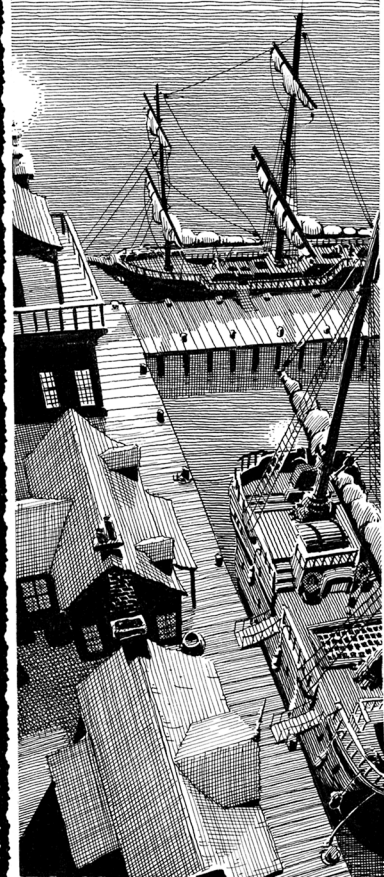
YOU
SEE
...



IT
WOULDN'T
...

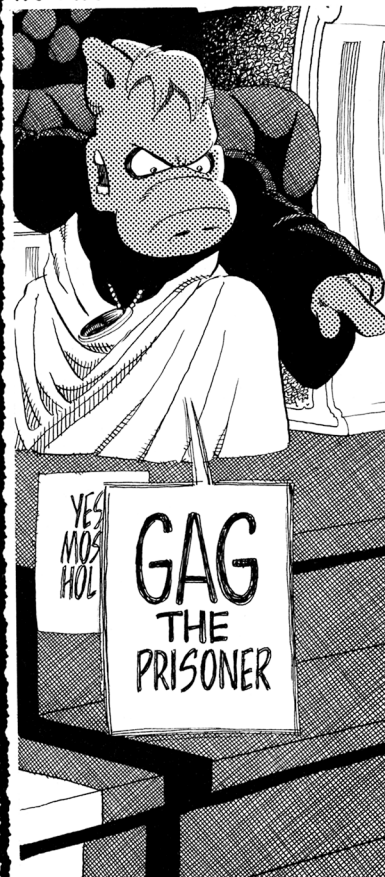
BURN.

GUARD*



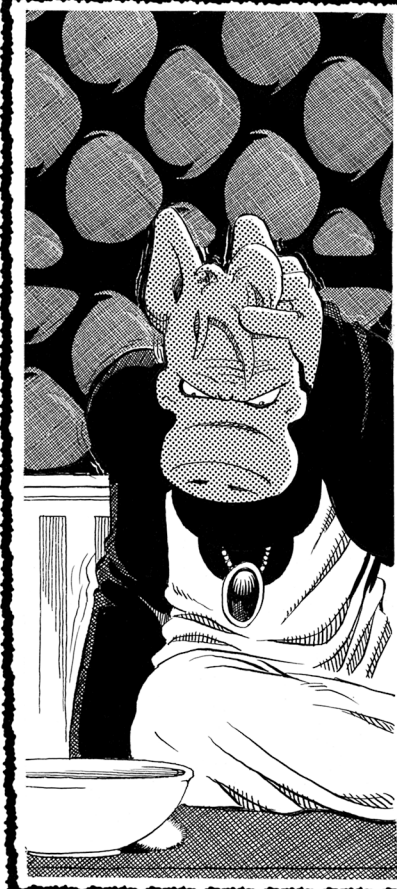
I
COULD
SEE IT
...

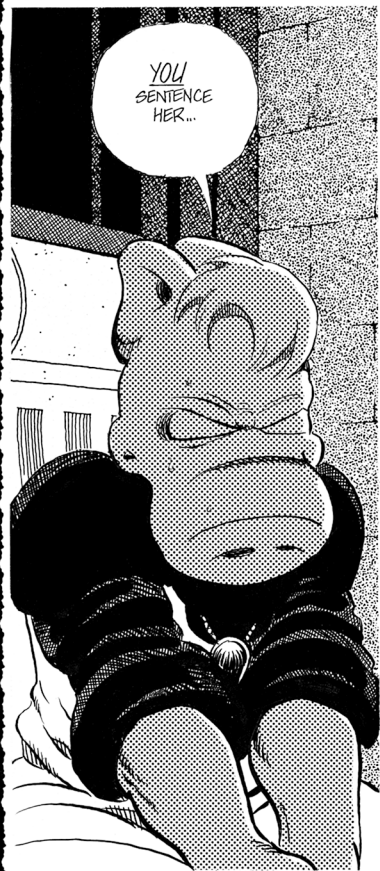
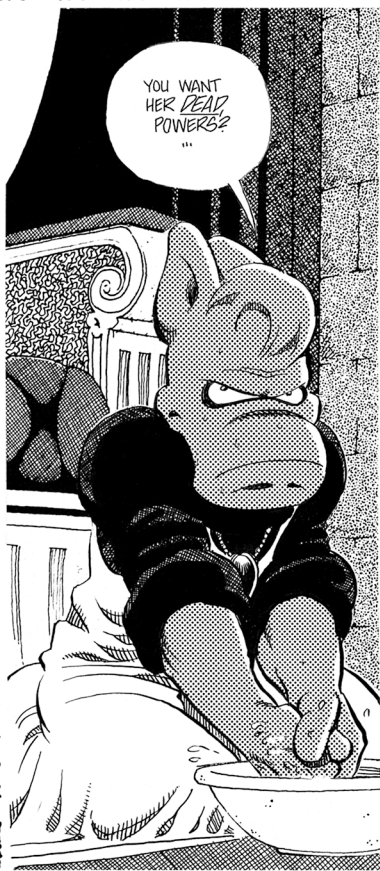
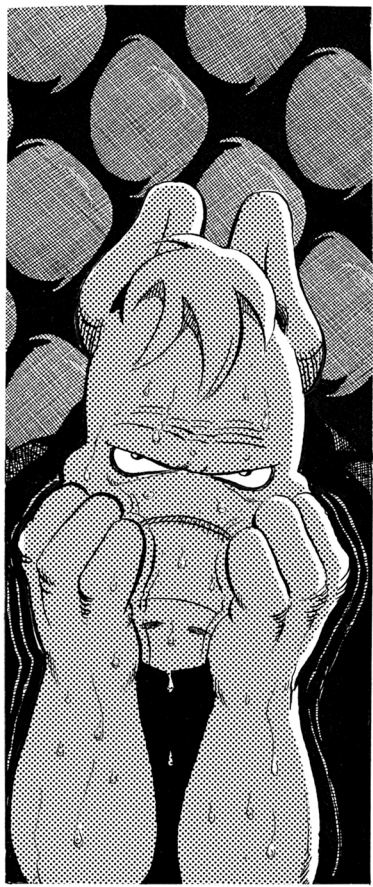
GUARD!

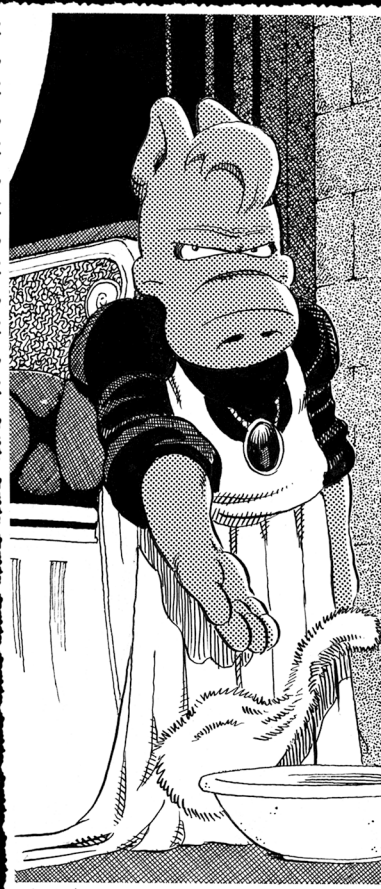
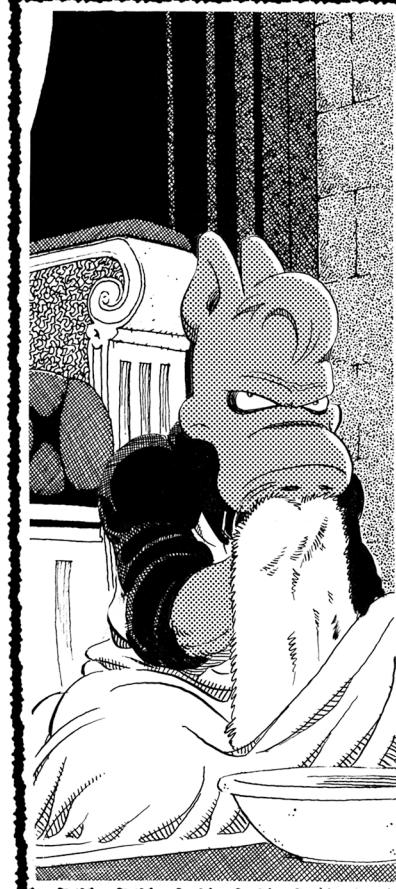


YES
MOST
HOL

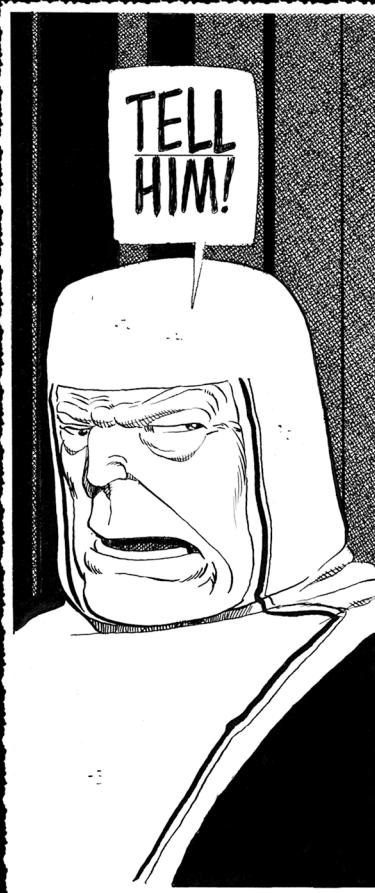
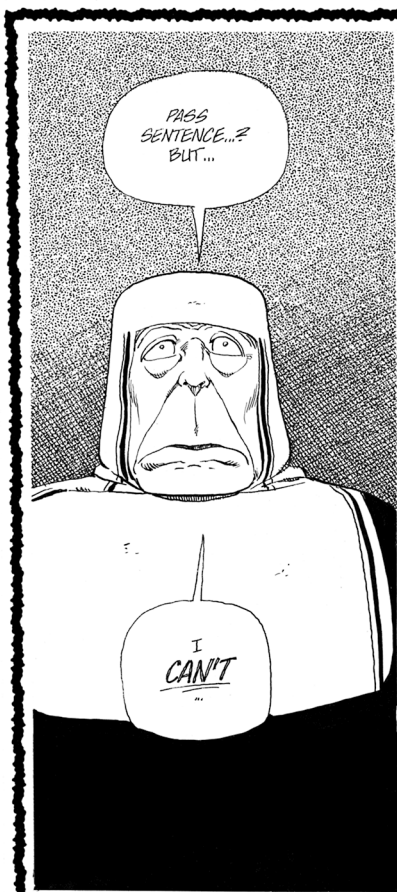
GAG
THE
PRISONER







CEREBUS
WASHES HIS
HANDS OF
THIS WHOLE
MESS



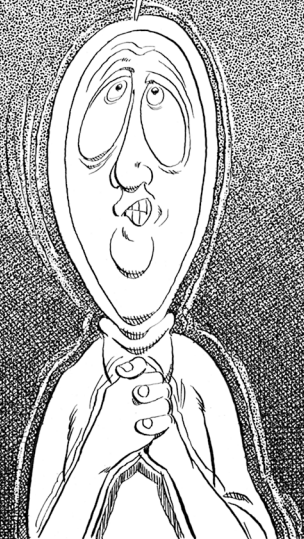
B-BY THE LANG OF
W-WHAT USED T-TO
BE THE W-WESTERN
CHURCH

THE K-KILLER
OF A P-P PONTIFF



IS TH-THAT
P-PONTIFF'S
S-SUCCESSOR

THE L-LION OF
S-SERREA S-SEIZED
P-POWER UNDER
TH-THAT L-LAW...
T-T-T...

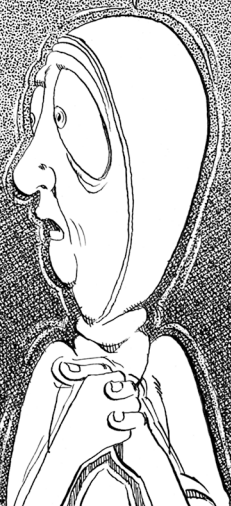


IT



TECH
NICALLY,
M-MOST H-HOLY,
AST-T-TORIA

...THE
P-P PRISONER
...IS TH-TH THE
W-WESTERN
P-PONTIFF



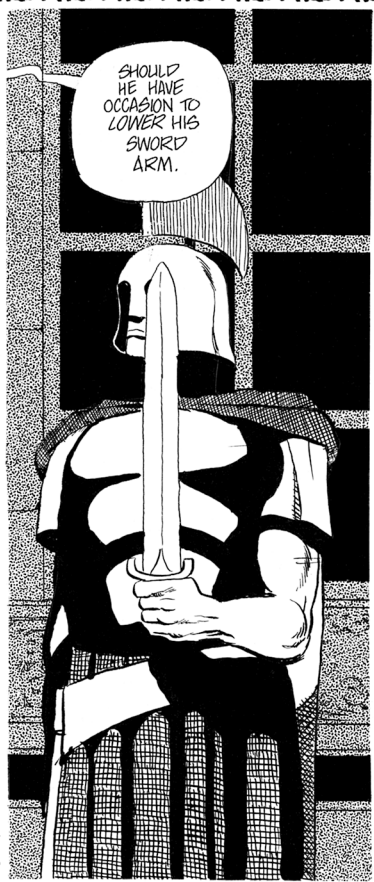
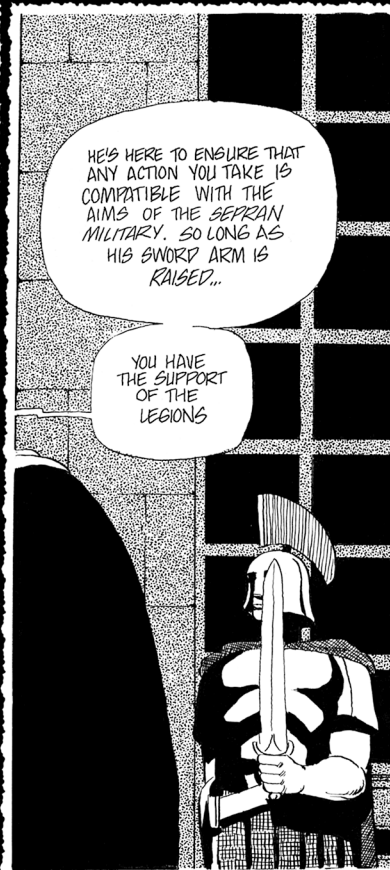
AND IF B-B BISHOP
P-PONERS ORDERED
HER EXECU-CU-CUTION

OR K-K-KILLED
HER H-H-HIMSELF
TH-THEN H-H-H
W-WOULD
B-B-BE...



PONTIFF





THE
SUPREME COMMANDER
OF THE WESTERN LEGIONS
UNDER THE LION OF
SERREA...

HE'S HERE TO ENSURE THAT
ANY ACTION YOU TAKE IS
COMPATIBLE WITH THE
AIMS OF THE SEFRAN
MILITARY. SO LONG AS
HIS SWORD ARM IS
RAISED...

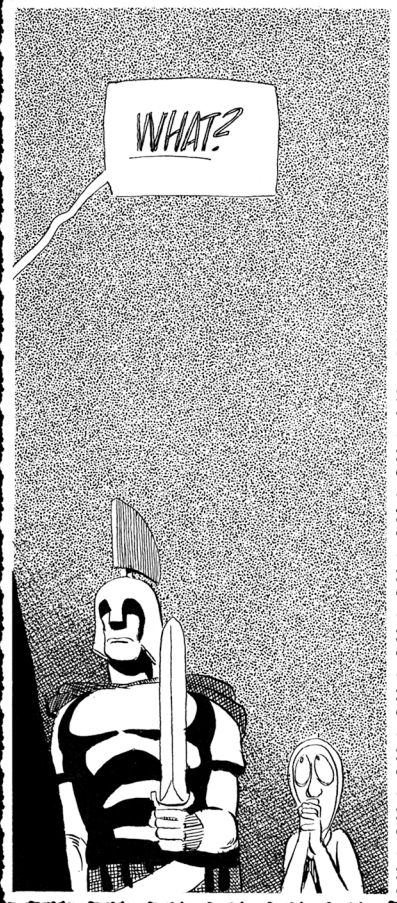
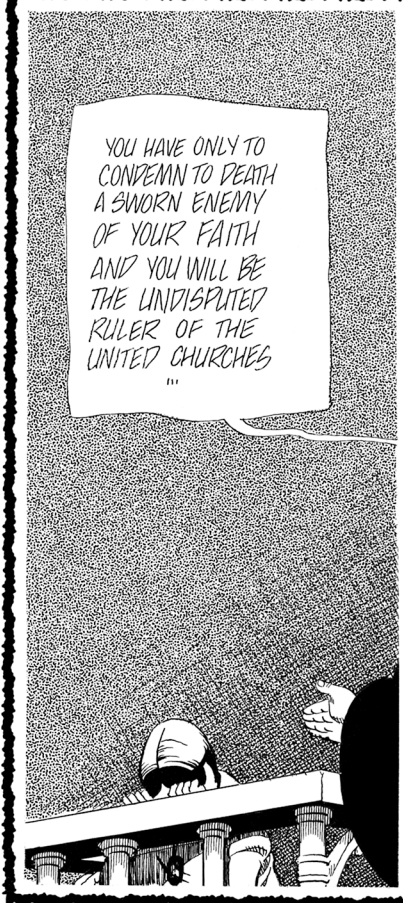
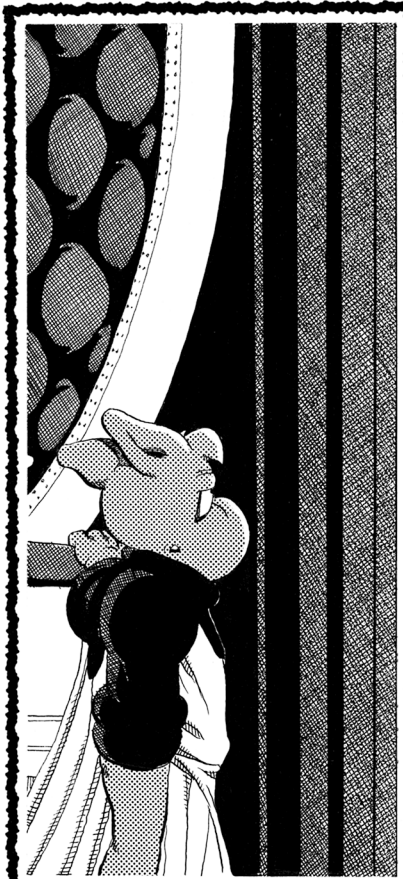
YOU HAVE
THE SUPPORT
OF THE
LEGIONS

SHOULD
HE HAVE
OCCASION TO
LOWER HIS
SWORD
ARM.

WELL.

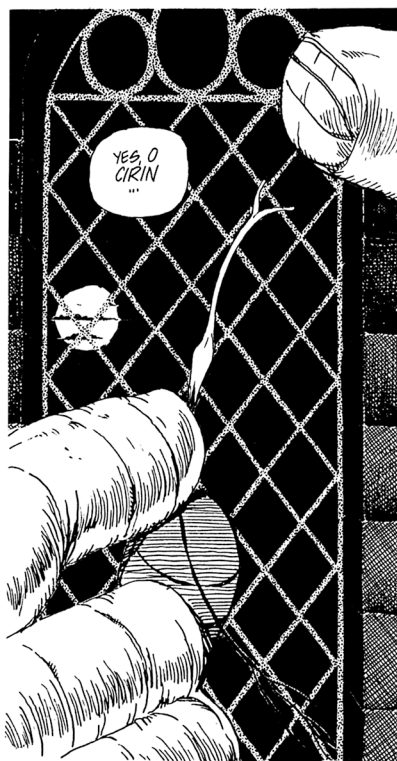
WE
ALL HOPE
THAT WON'T
PROVE TO
BE...

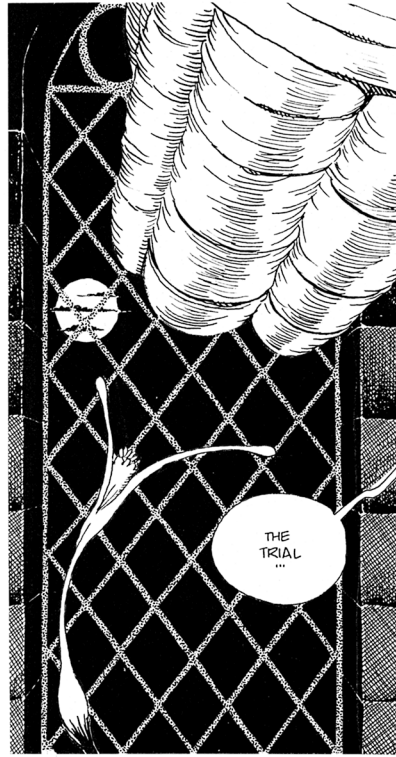
NECESSARY.

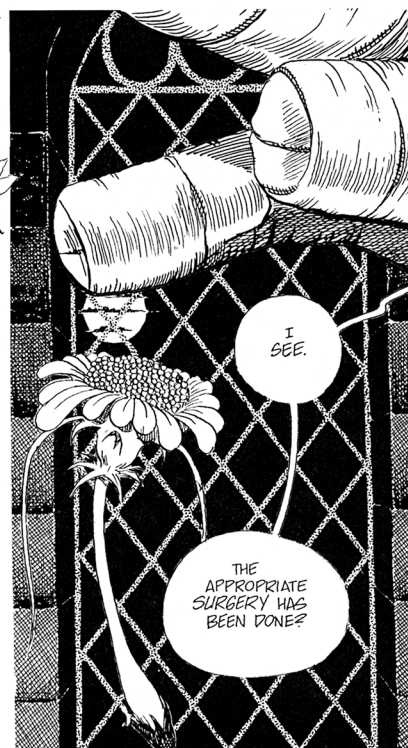
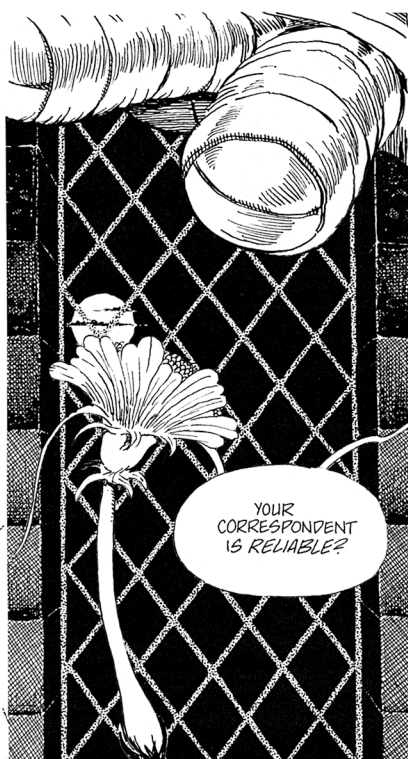


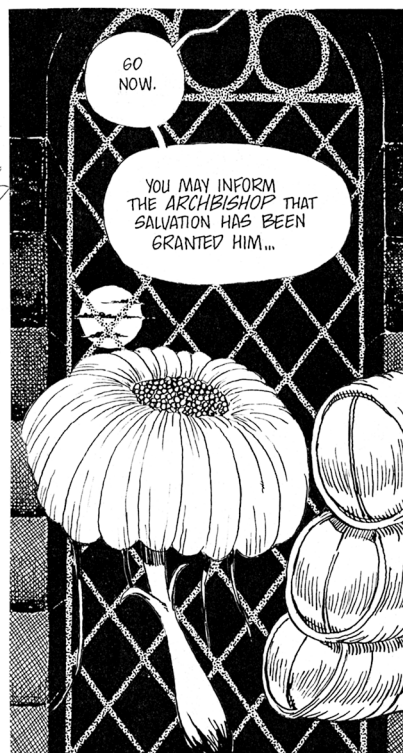
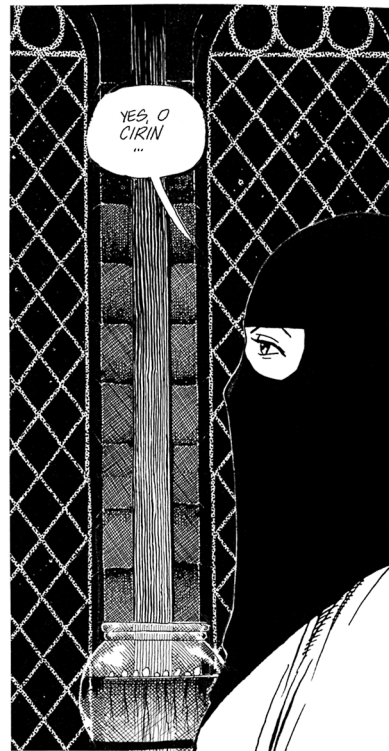


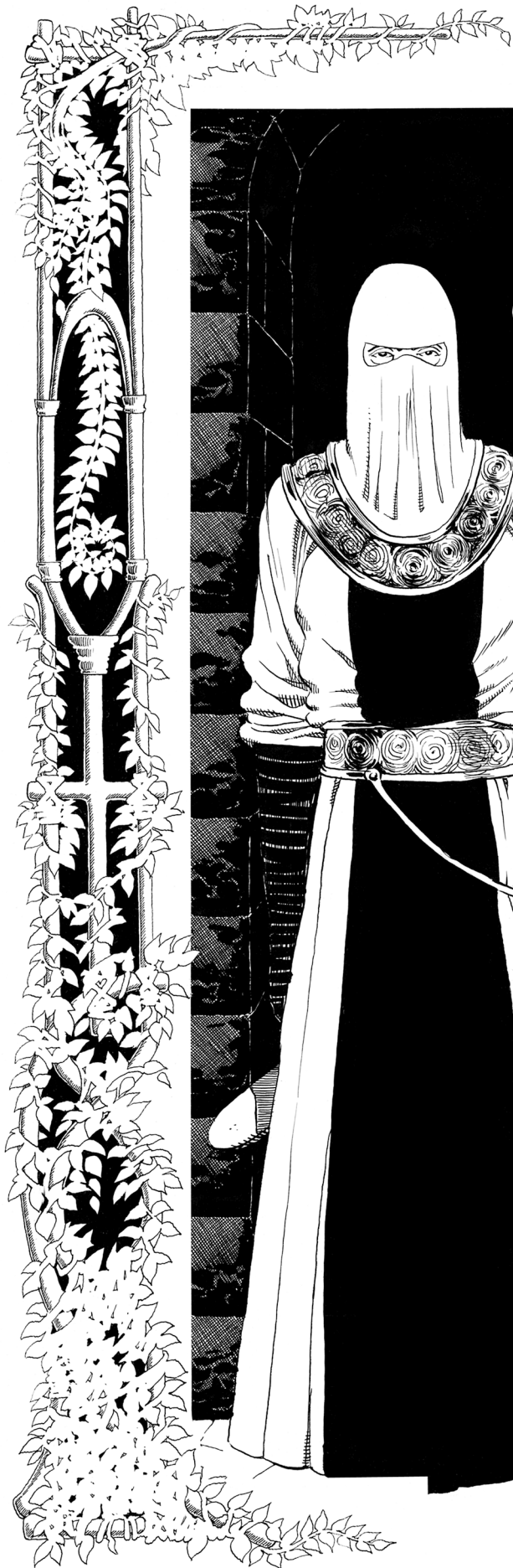












CIRCE!

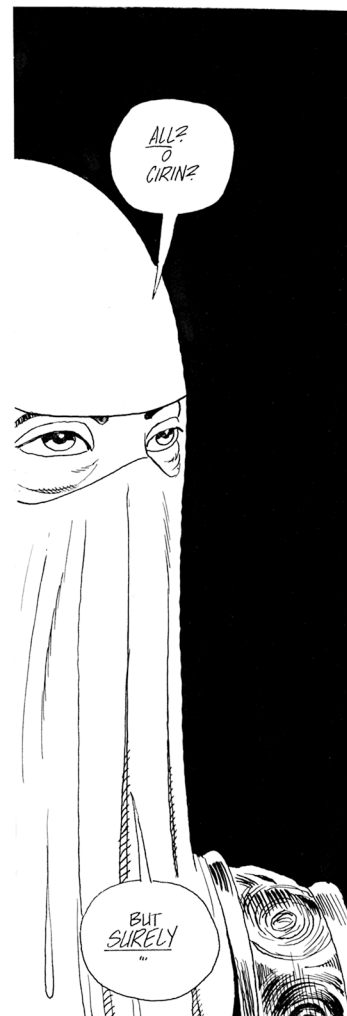
I DIDN'T EVEN
HEAR YOU COME
IN... MY MIND'S
BEEN WANDERING
SO...

THE
INVASION
OF IEST,
YOU SEE,
IT'S
...

...TIME.

YES, O CIRIN!
TWO
DIVISIONS?
...

ALL
OF OUR
FORCES
...

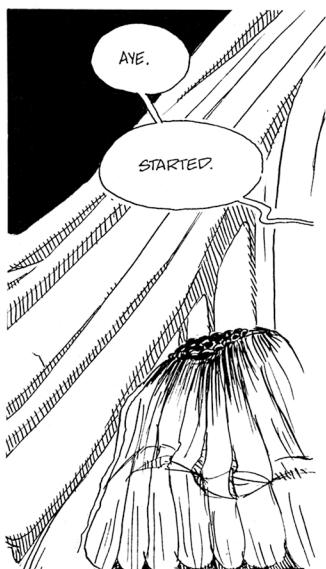
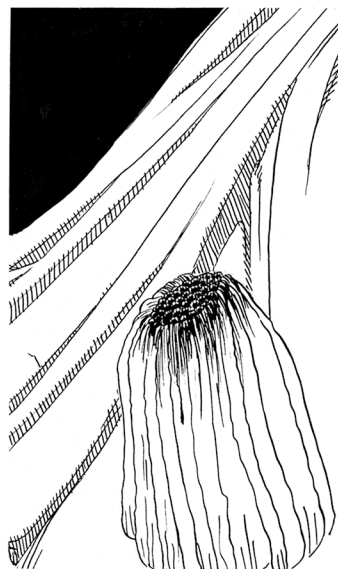
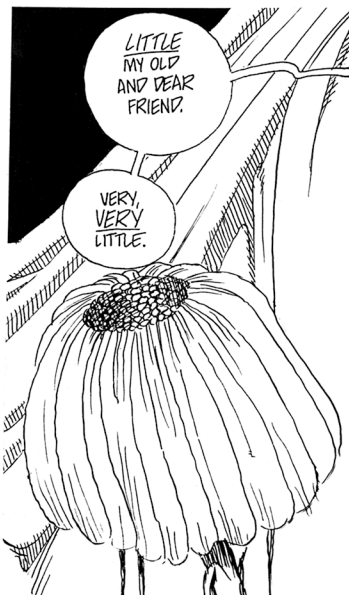
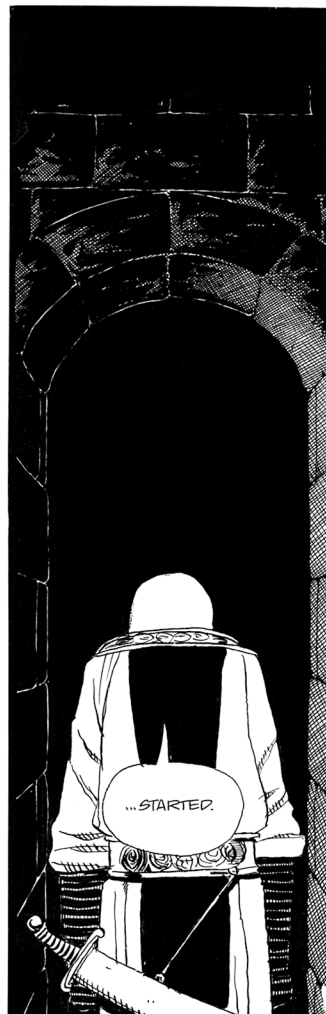
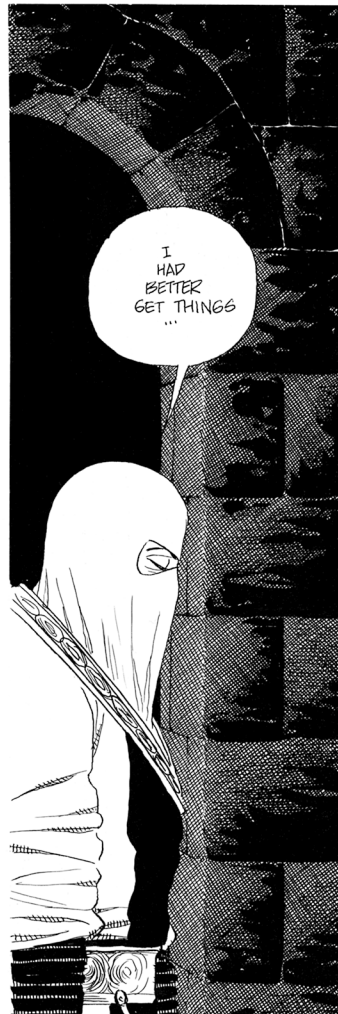
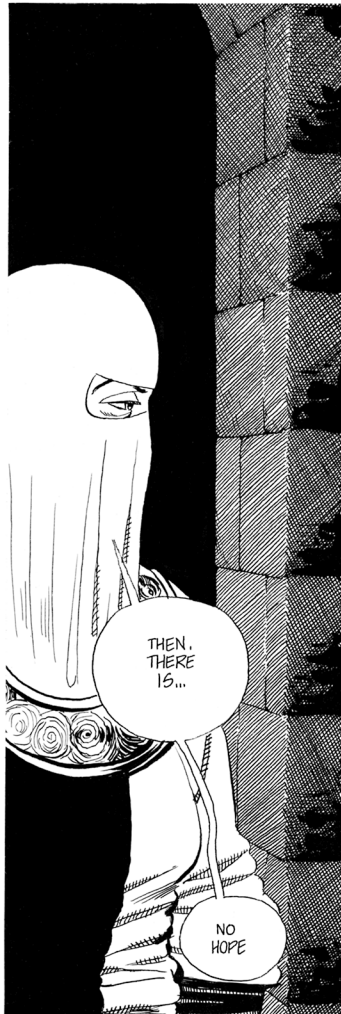


ALL?
O
CIRIN?

BUT
SURELY
...



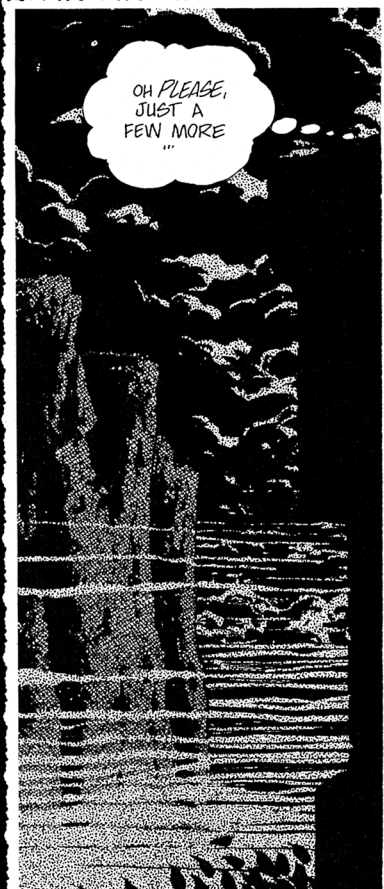
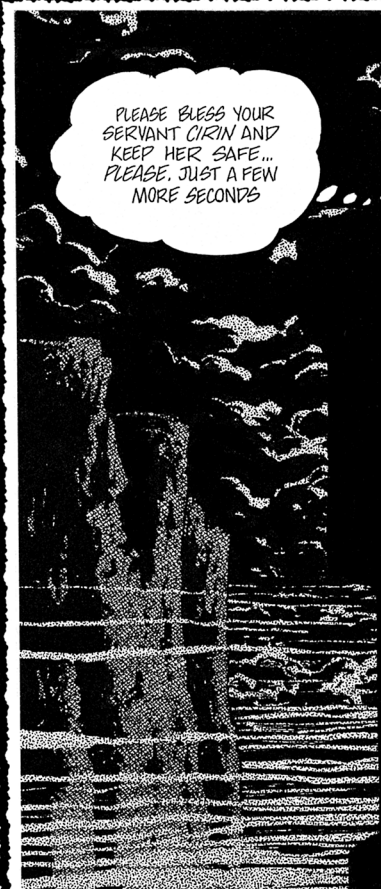
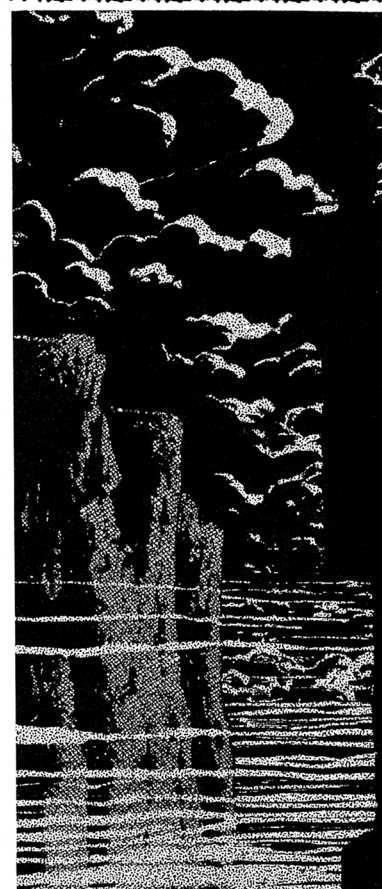
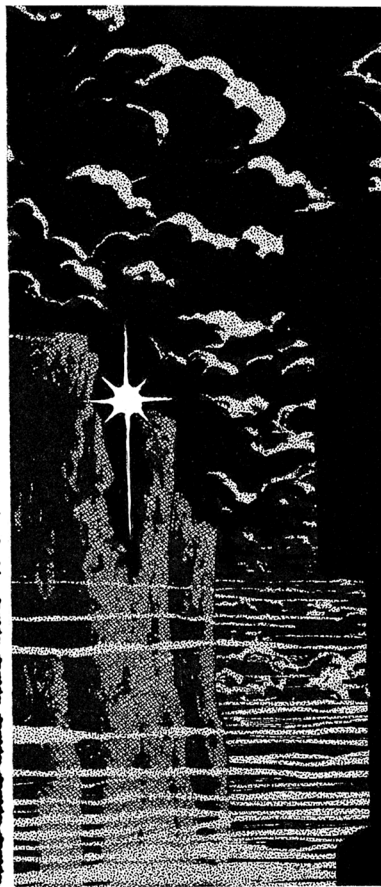
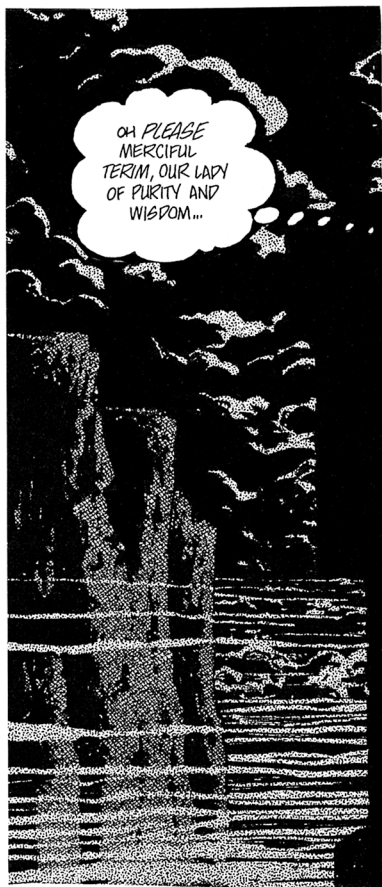
ALL
OF OUR
FORCES

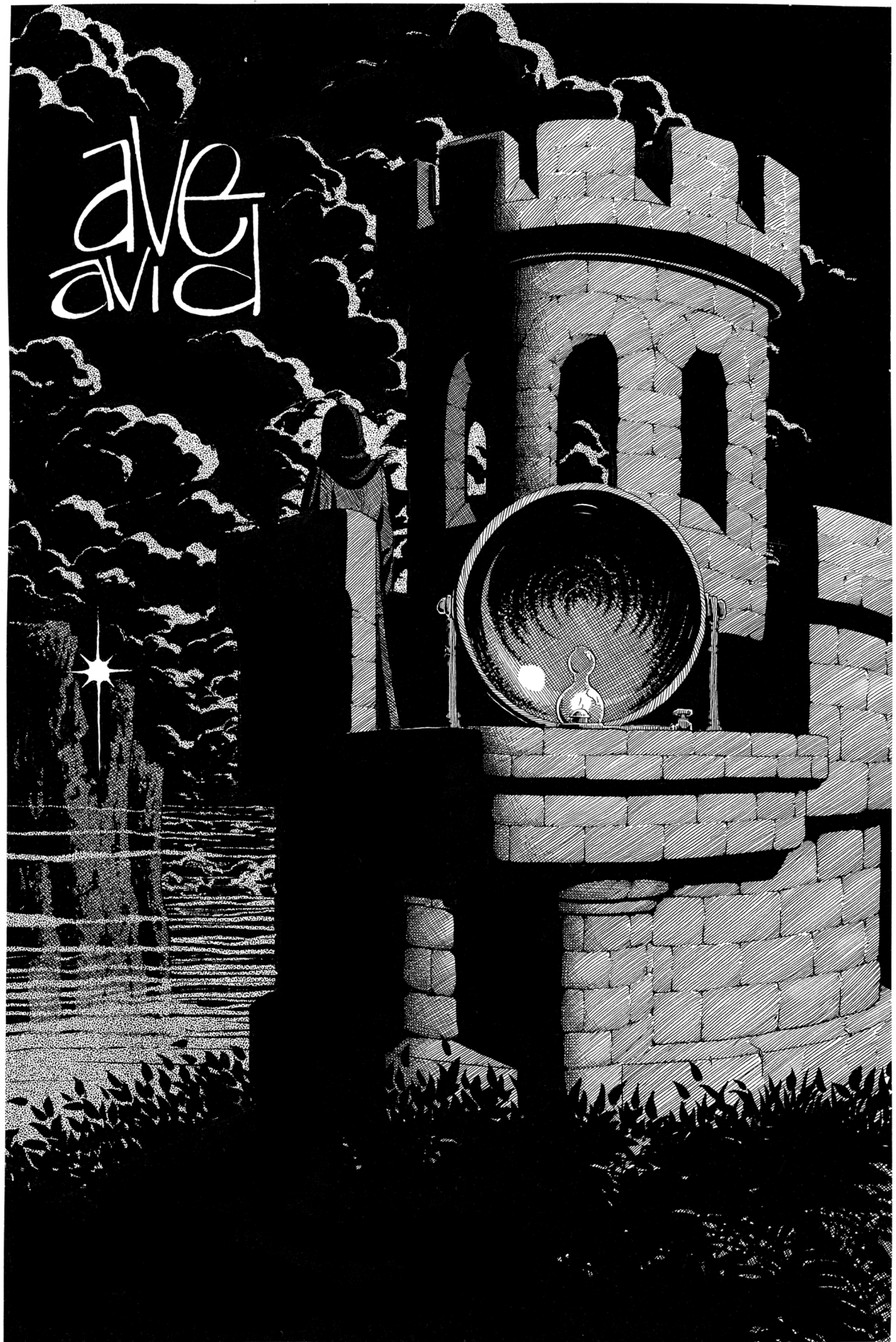


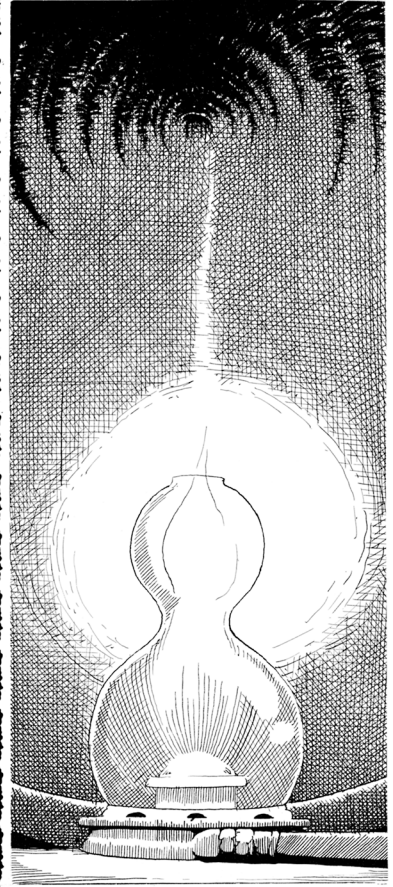
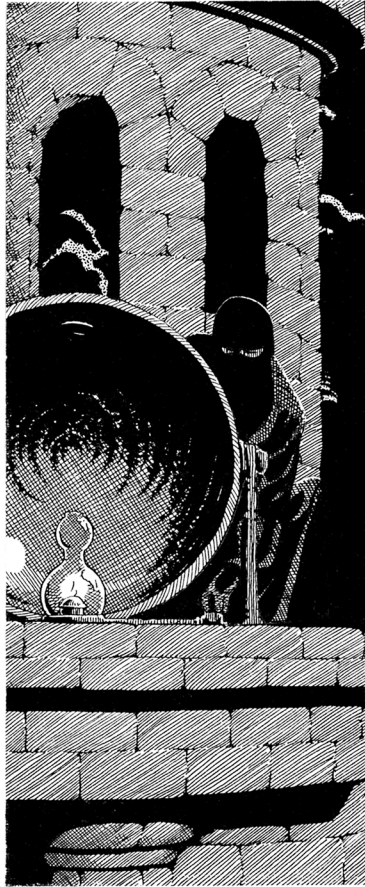
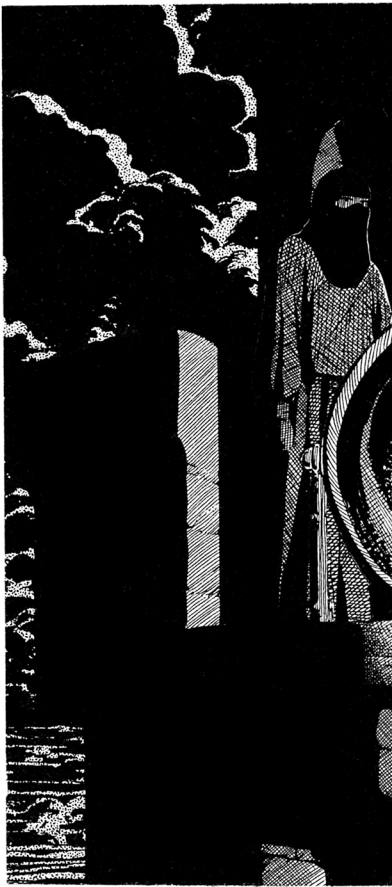


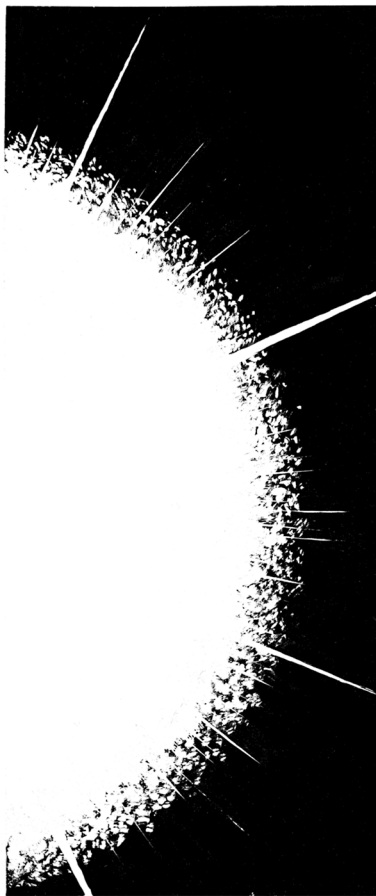
AND MAY
TERIM
HAVE MERCY
ON US
ALL...

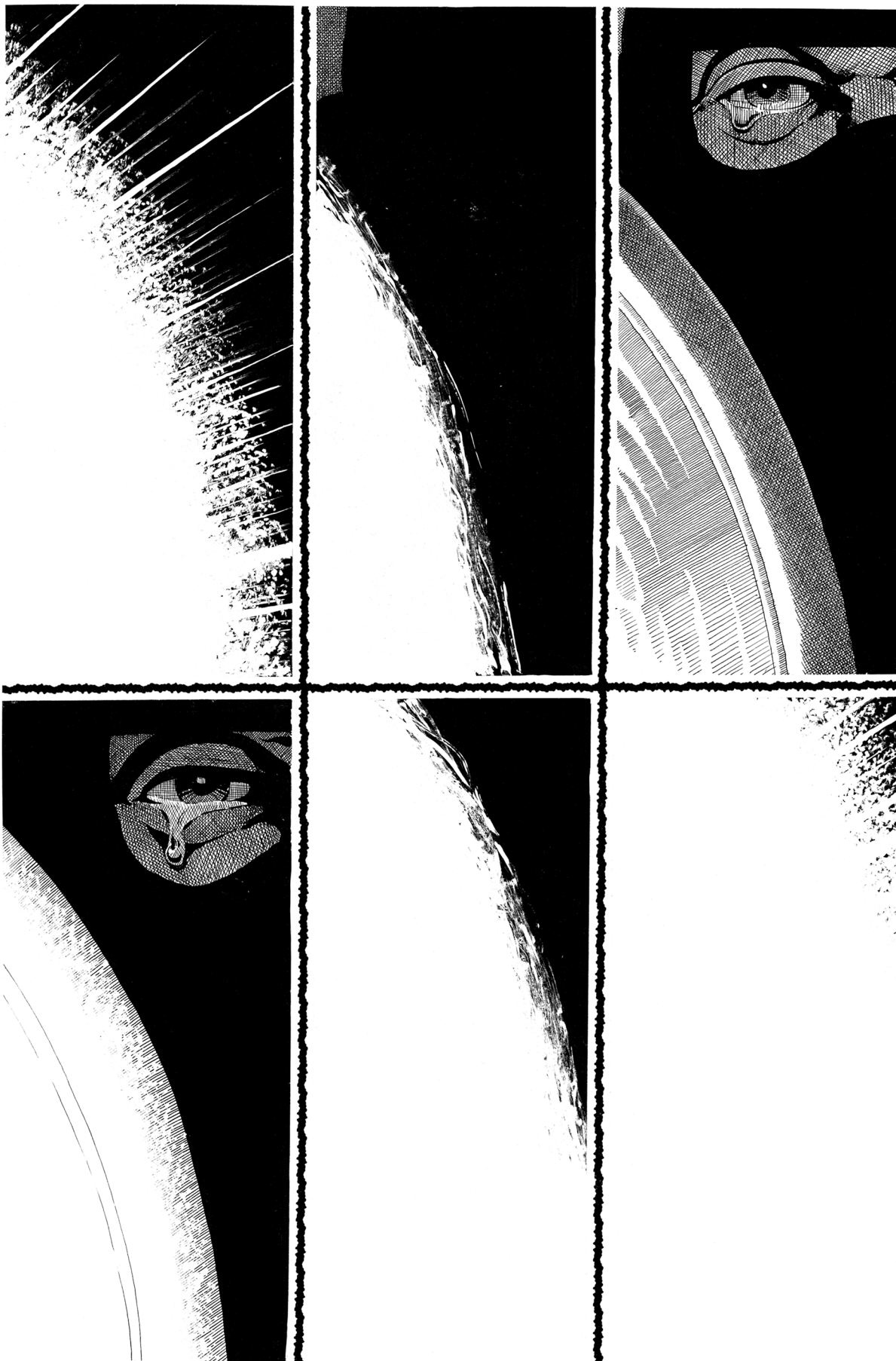
NEXT:
CHECKMATE

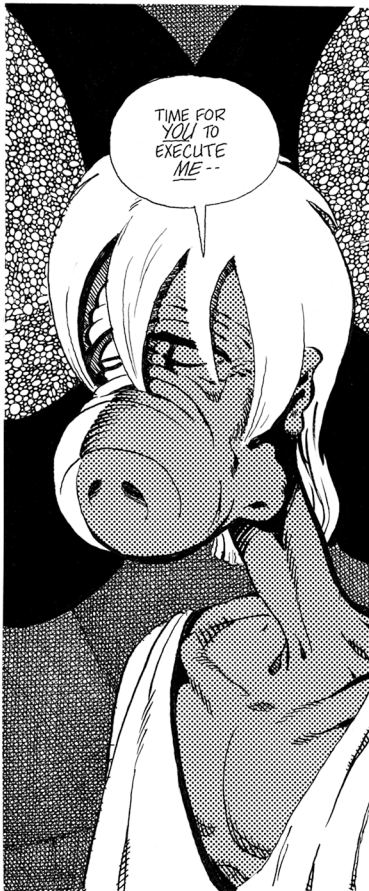


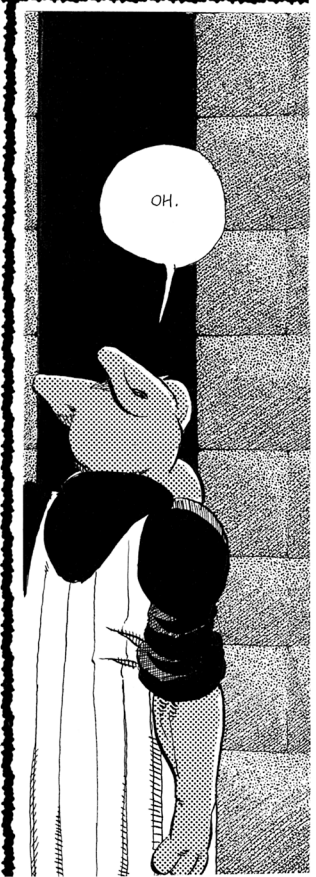
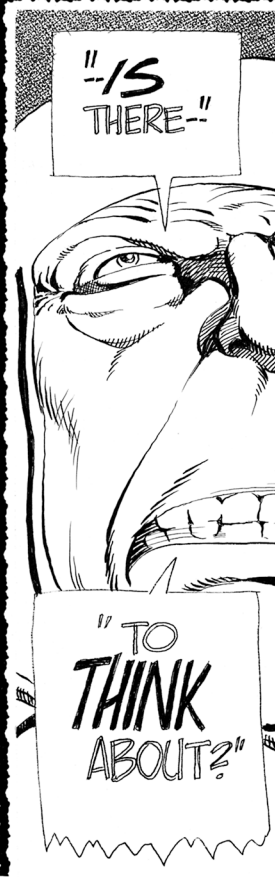
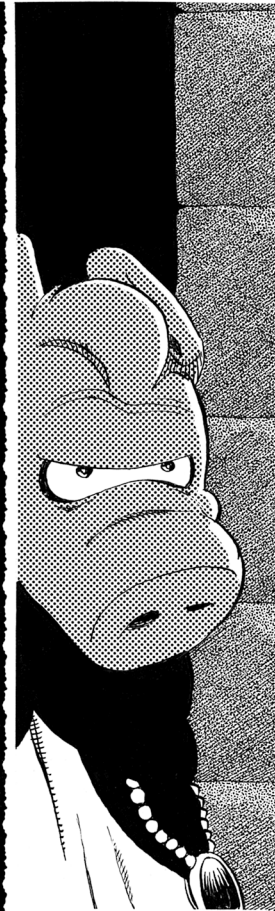
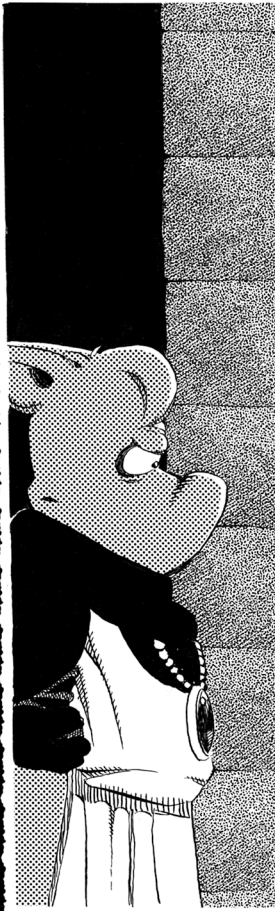




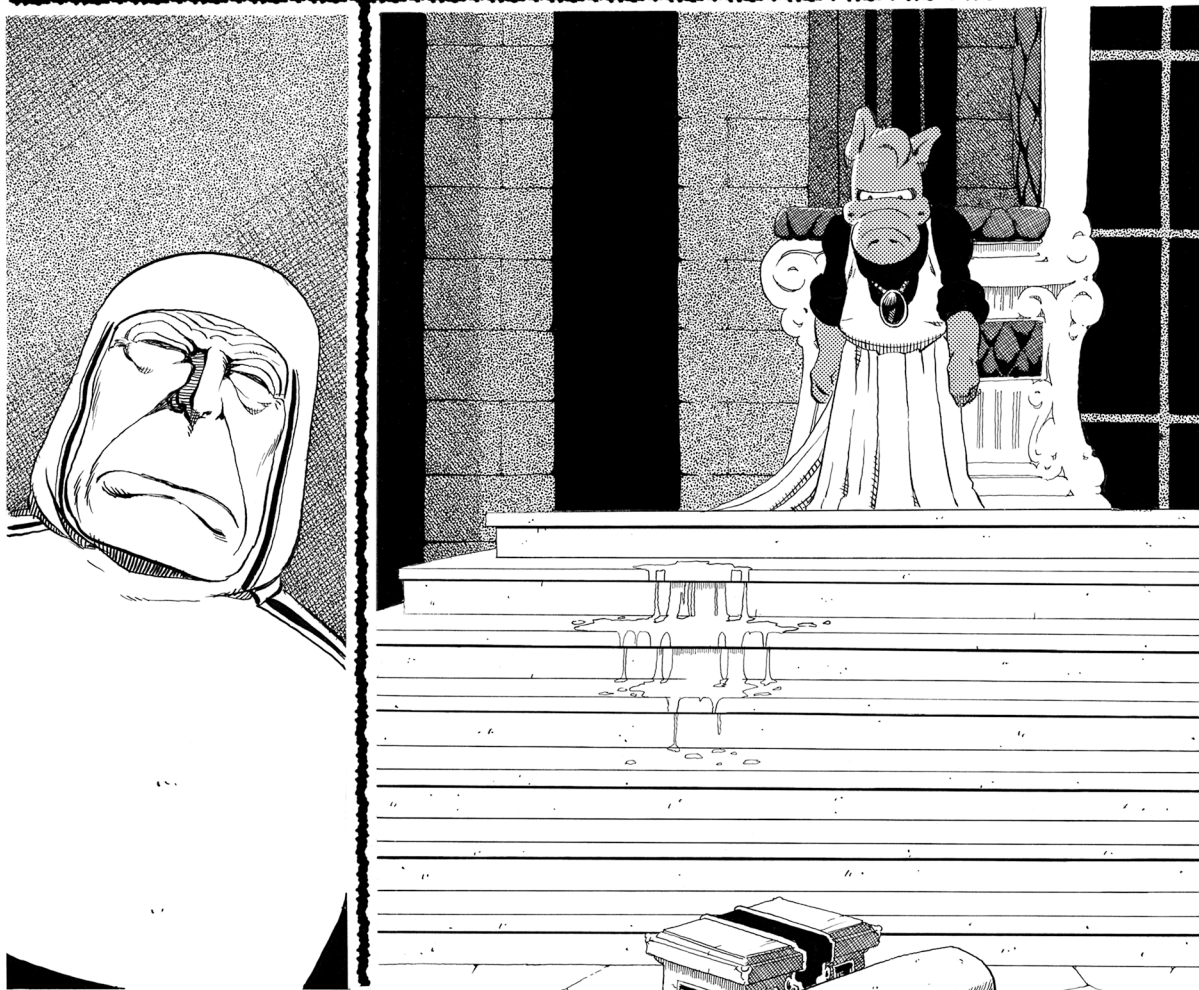
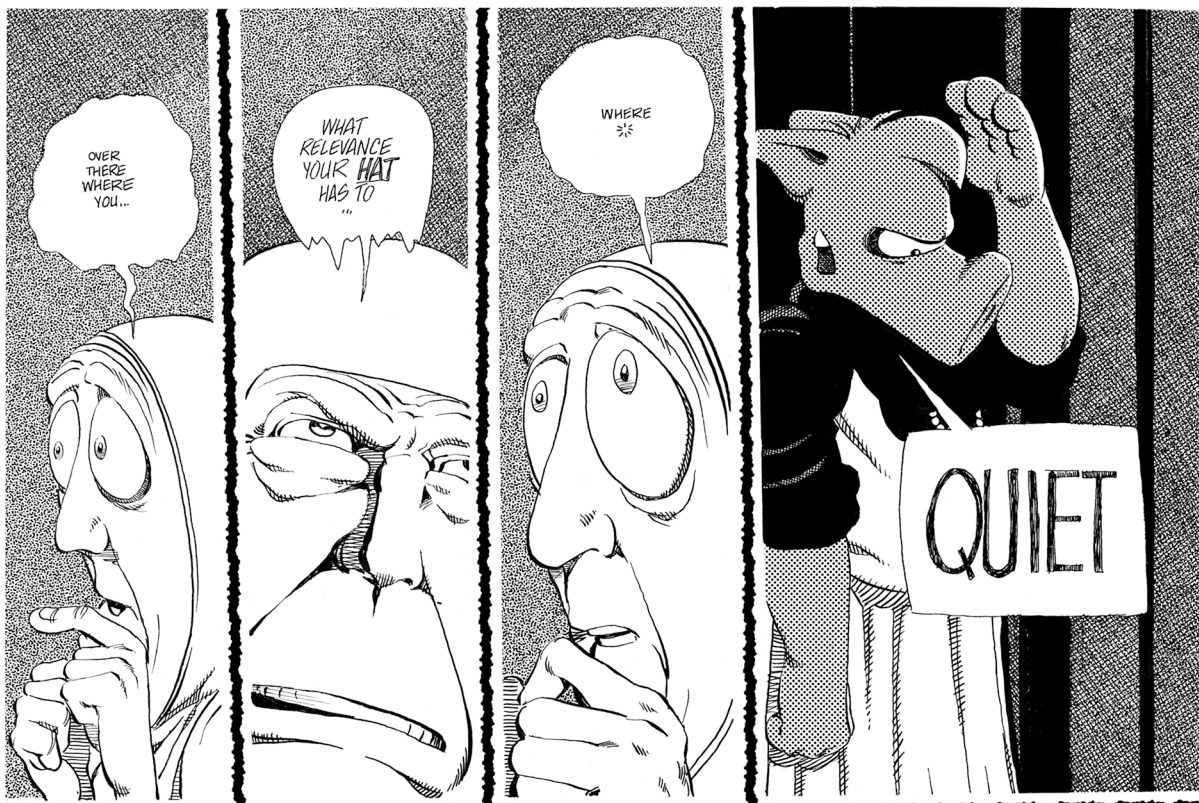


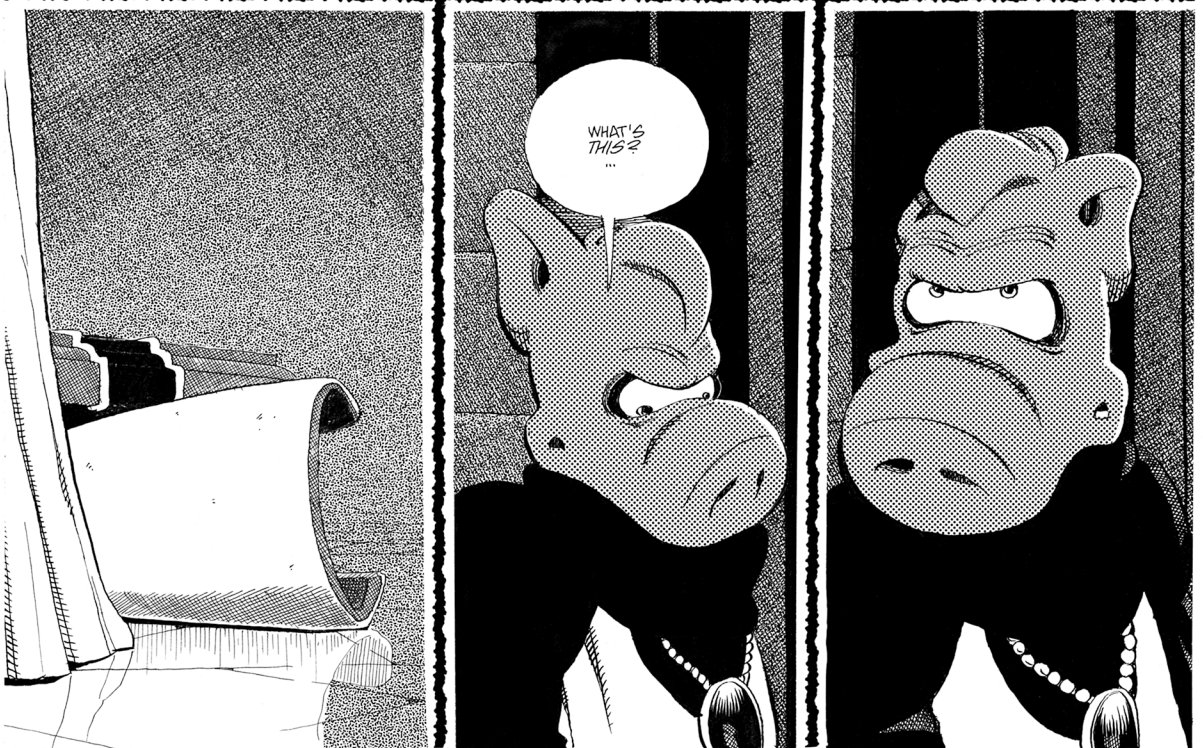


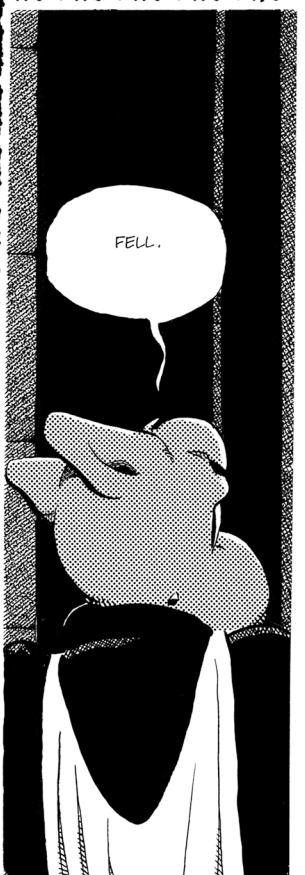
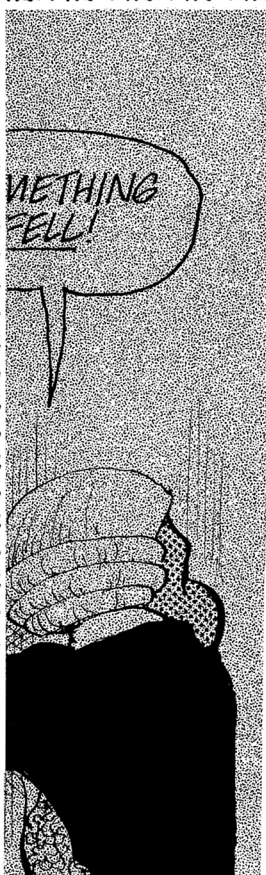
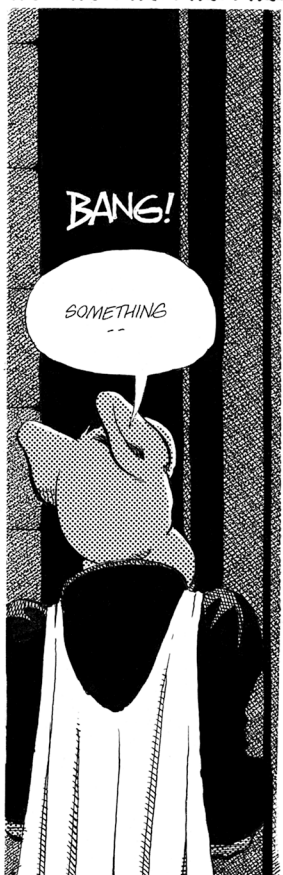
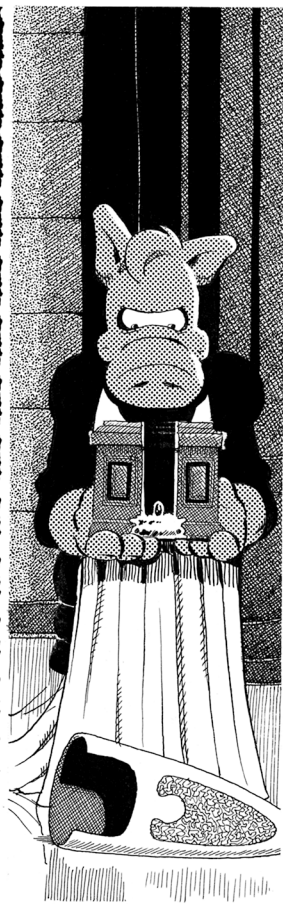
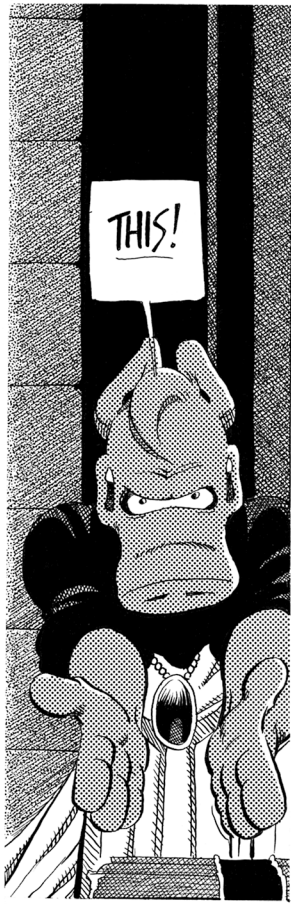


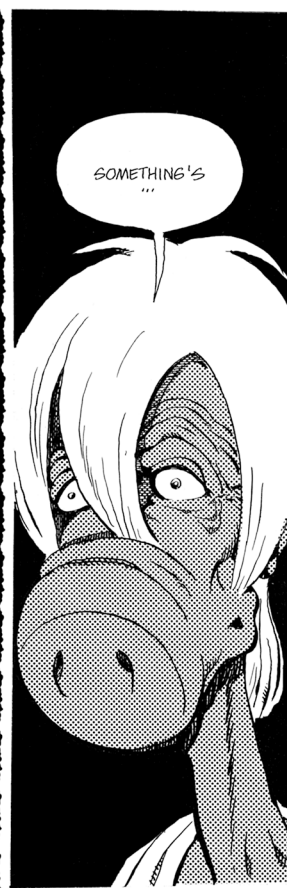
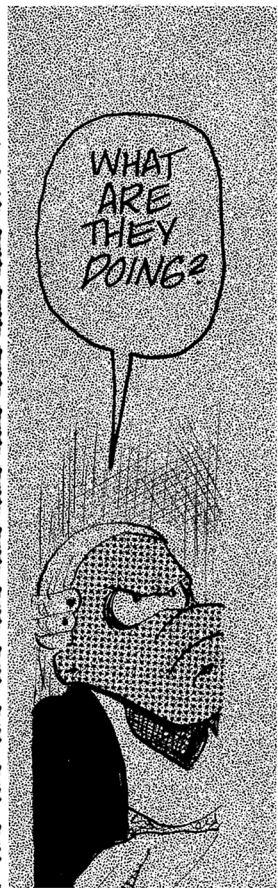
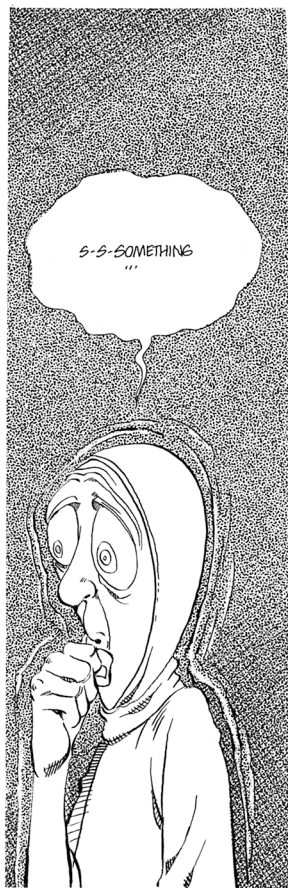


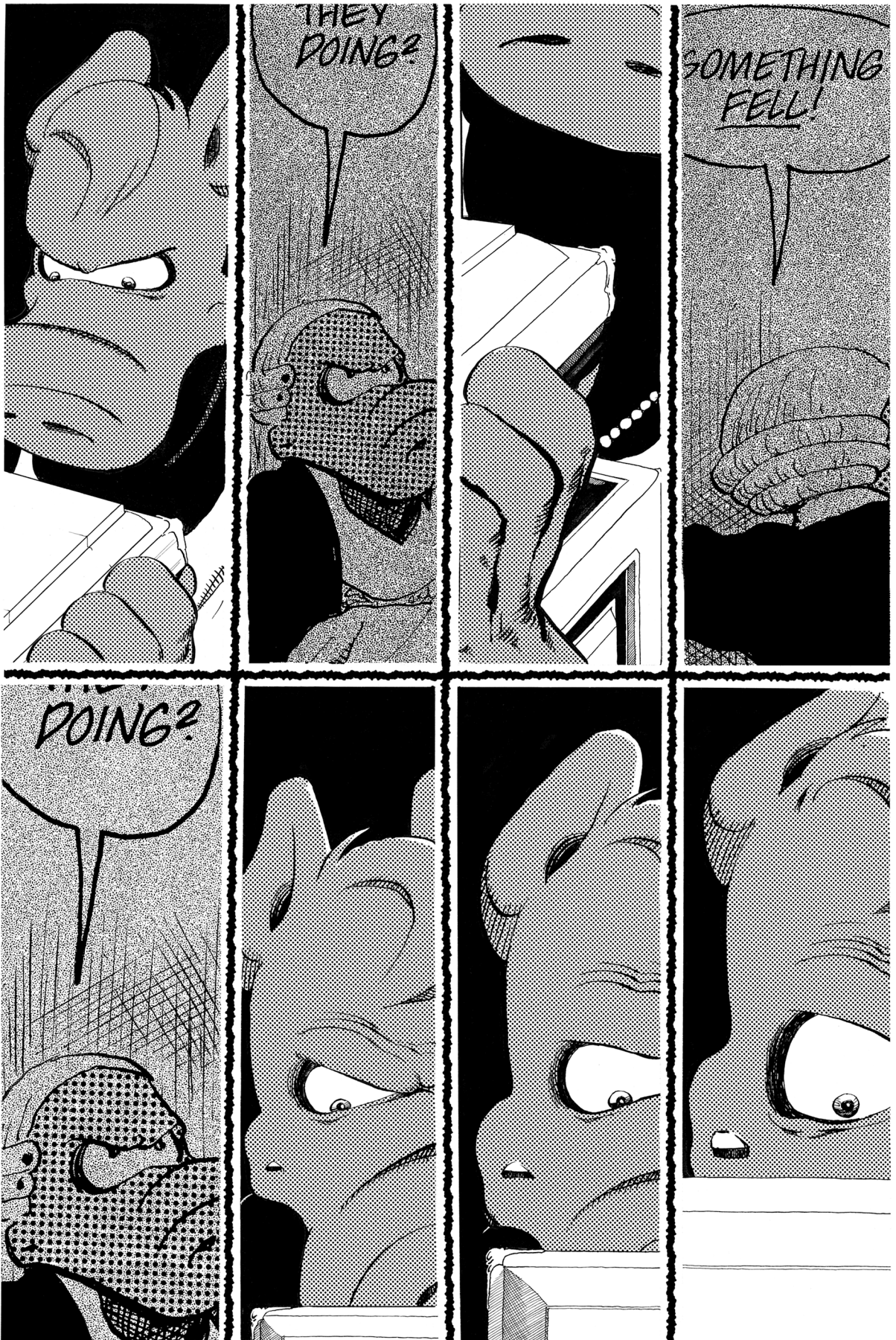




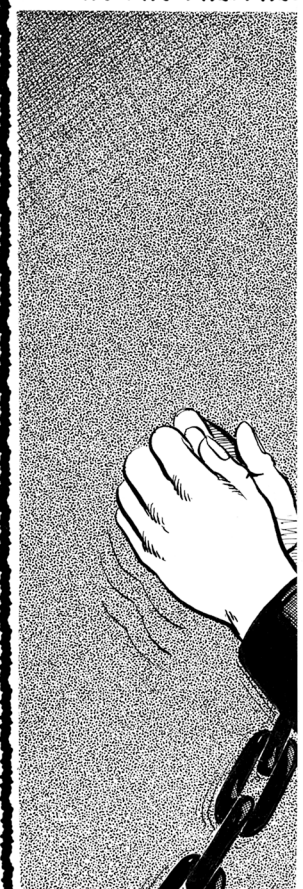
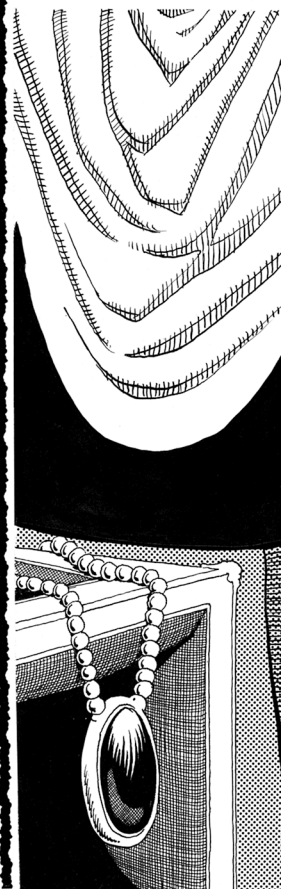
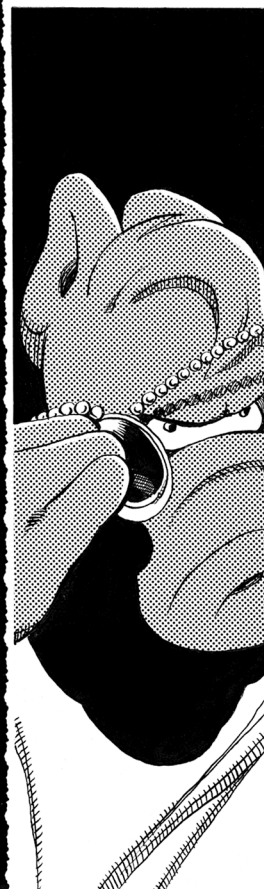
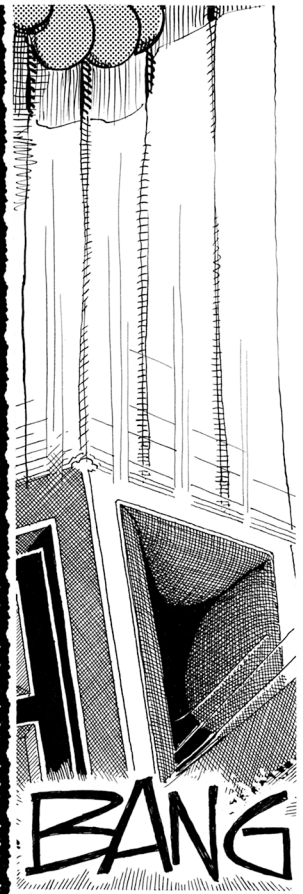
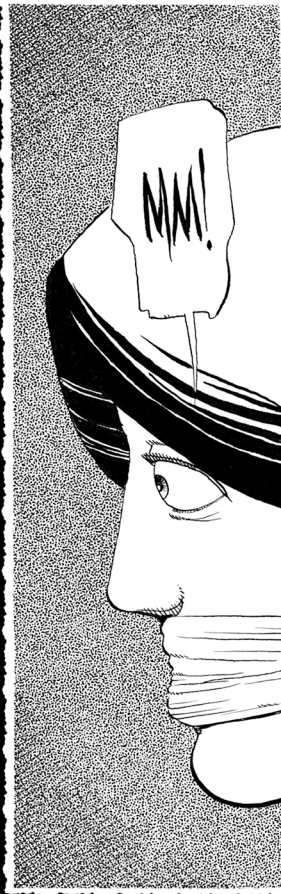


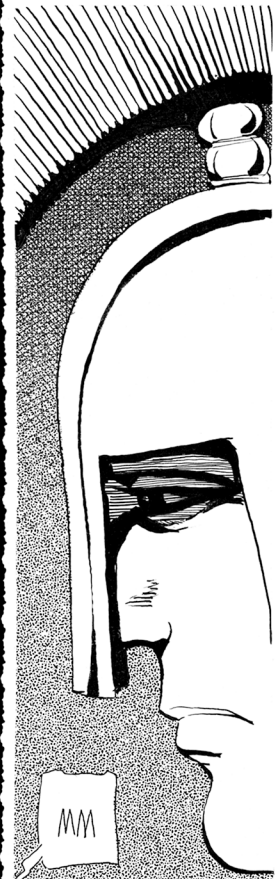
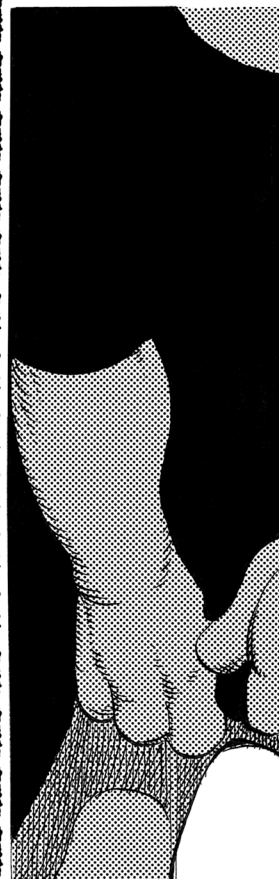
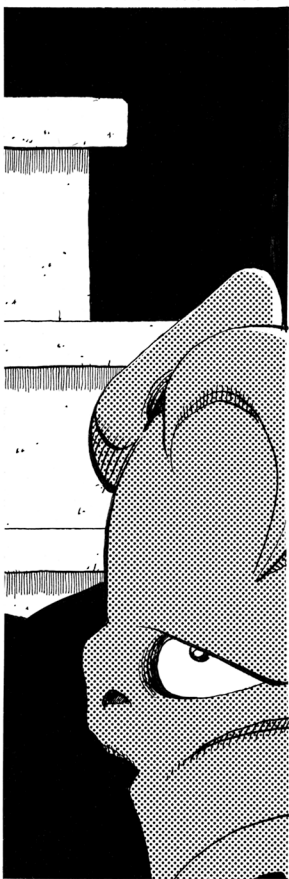
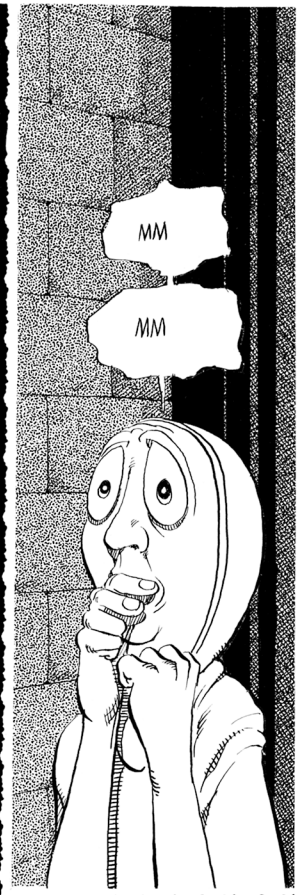
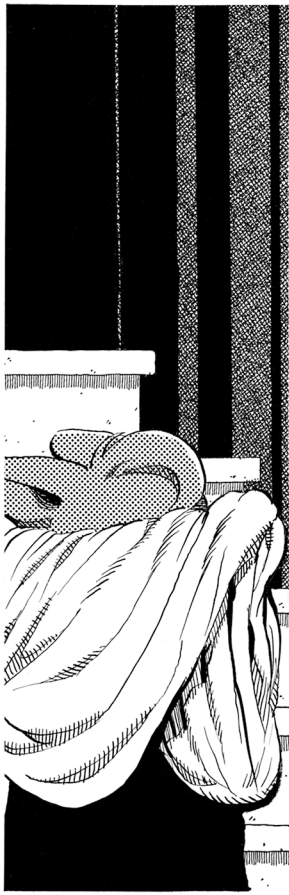


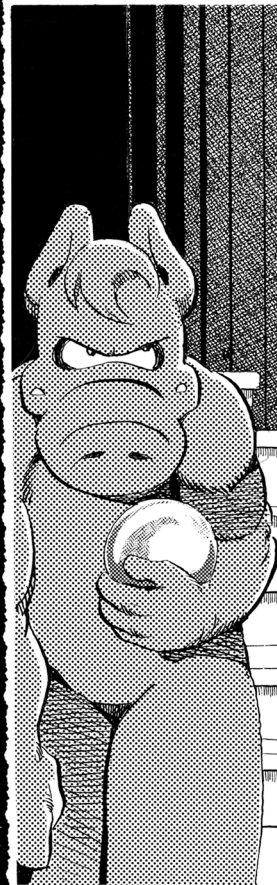
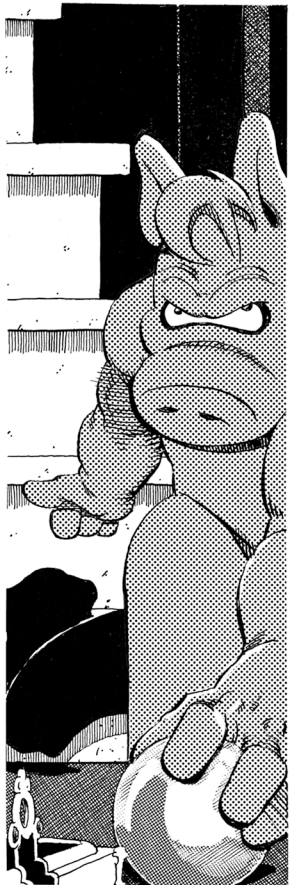
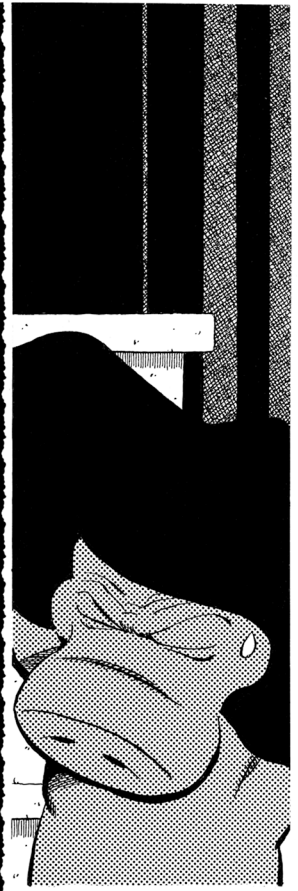


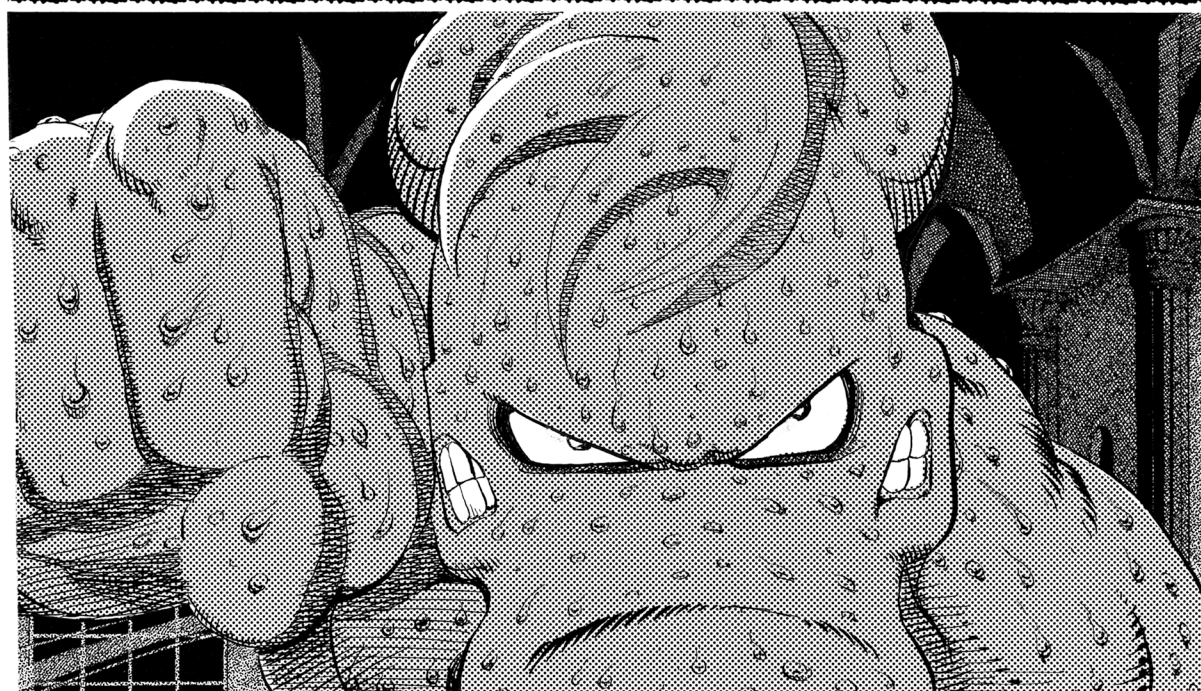
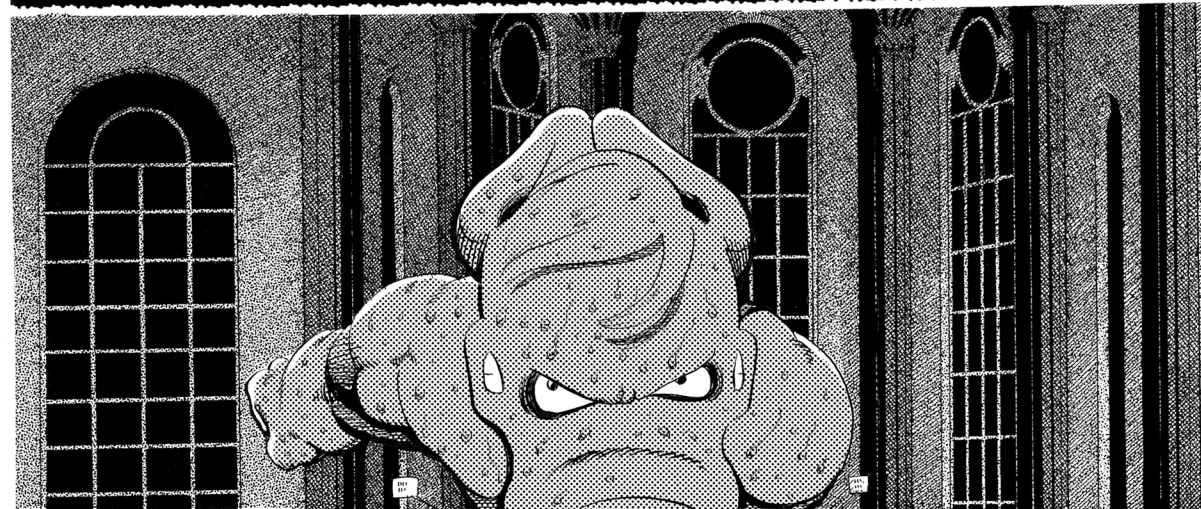
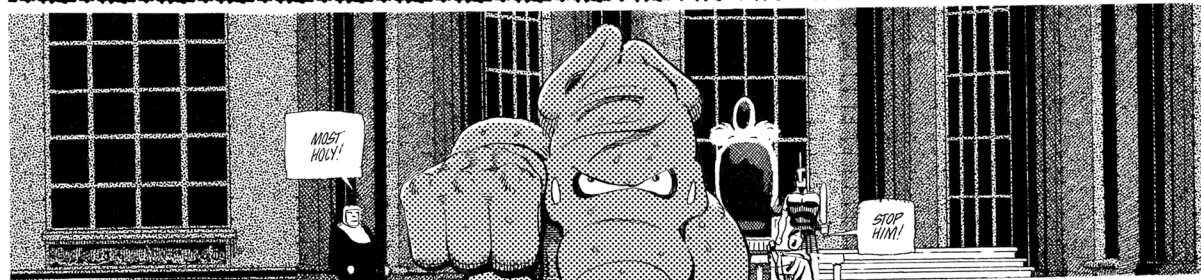
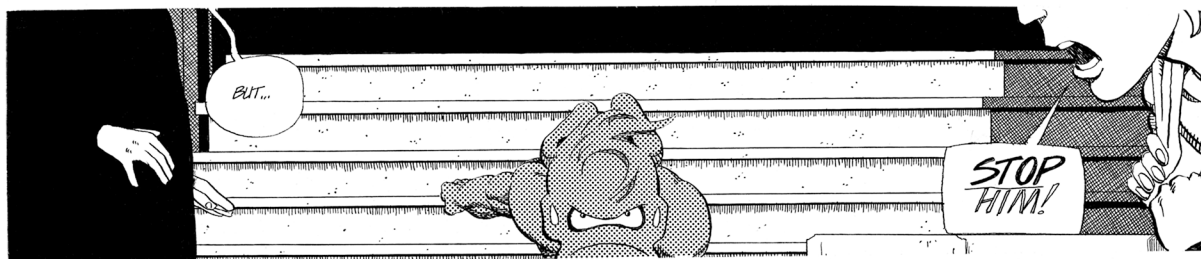




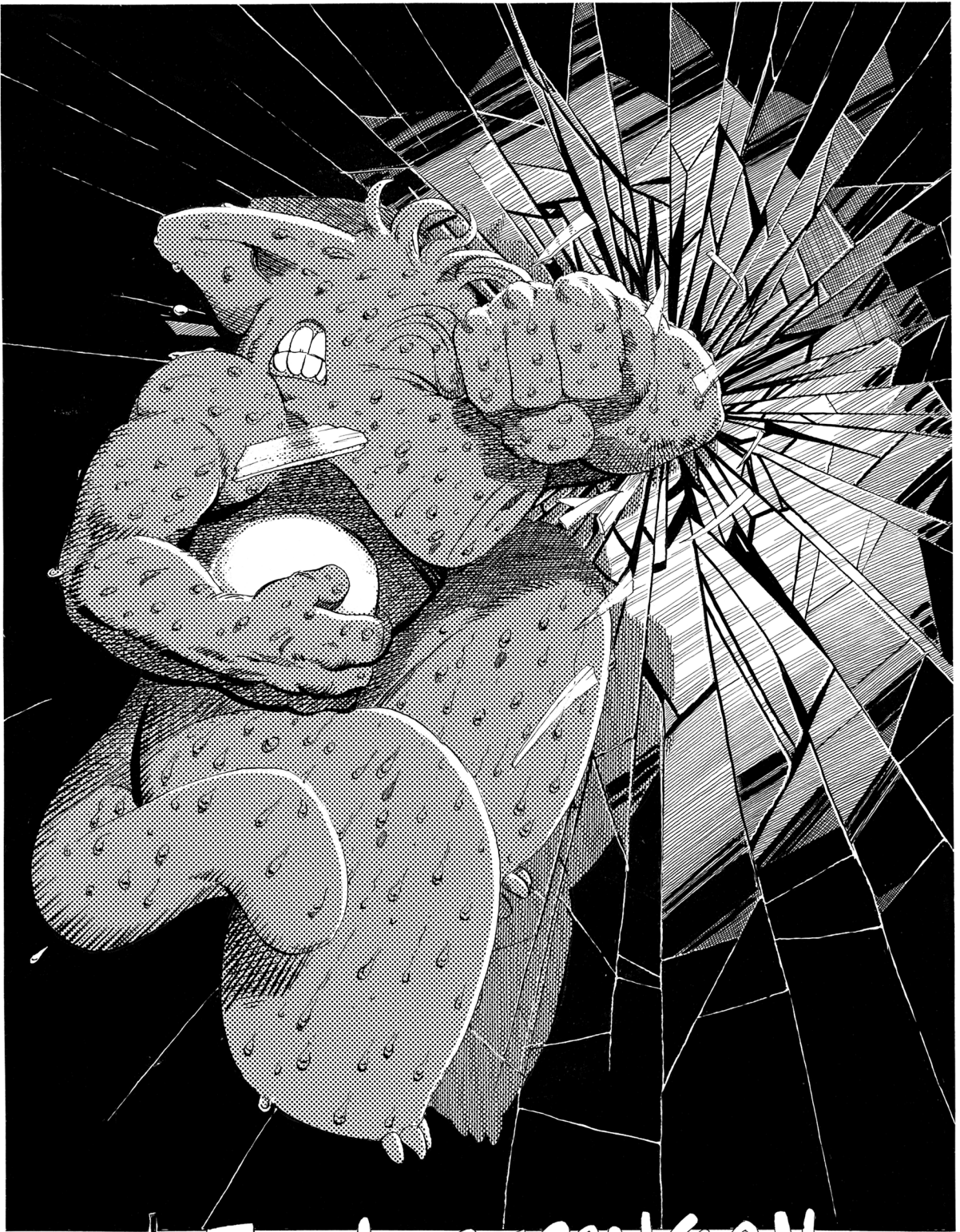












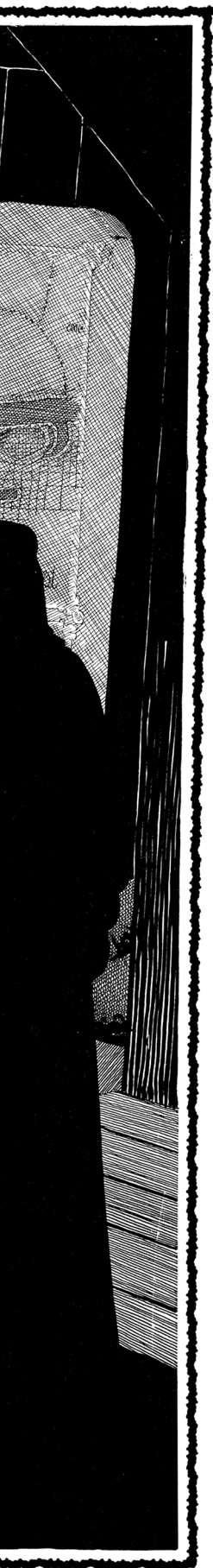
NEXT: The Final ascension

BOOK SIX
The Final Ascension

the
FINAL
ascension

5 1 x





Cerebus' arm strikes the thick pane of Panrovian Dynasty glass, producing out of the polished, placidly-flowing whole, a spider-web of antiquitous fragments. The glittering rectangle shape of a splinter, cork-screwing from the point of impact, leaves a nearly imperceptible trail across the sweat-slickened fur of the Earth-pig's left breast.

Miles to the west, the Abbess stands contemplating, brow furrowed, thoughts racing. The object of her concentration is the surface of the concave dish below her, or more precisely, the images projected thereon by an elaborate series of lenses, gears and levers.

Thumb and forefinger manipulate the larger of two rings set within the handle. Images of the Docks, the Chesmi, the Feld, the Lower and Upper City, the soot-smudged and tottering remains of the Suburbs, like weary but resolute supplicants at the feet of some dark and terrible god, drift to the edges of the dish, and over.

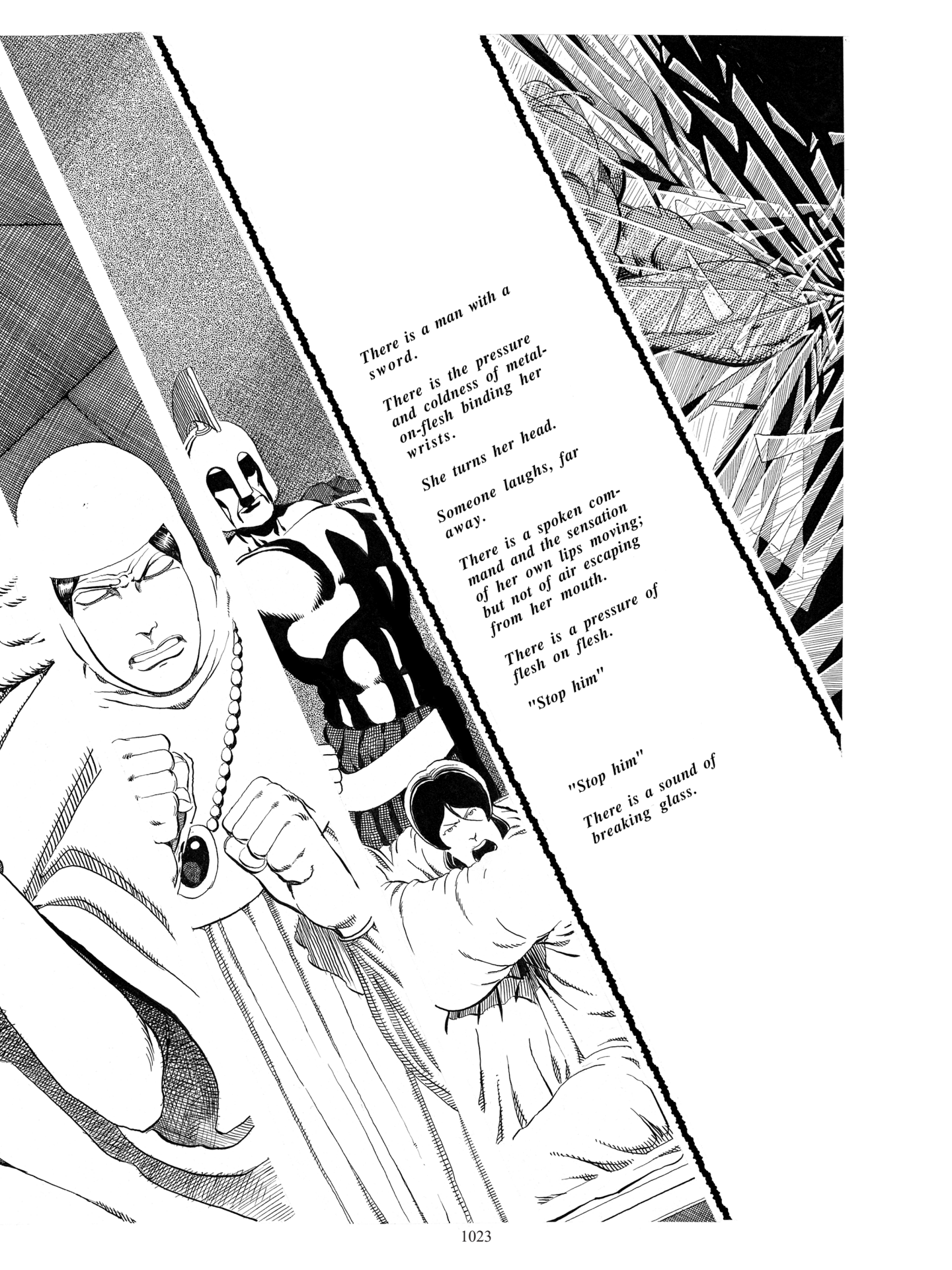
Each twist of the ring brings it closer; a mindless behemoth drawn, turn by turn, across the intervening miles of buildings and countryside, its looming presence dwarfing all other features and terrain, filling this small room, thinning the air, crowding her so that, unconsciously, she grips the railing with trembling fingers.

In the blinking of an eye, ragged top flowing, reforming, swelling, the Tower doubles and redoubles its size. Its image inches across the face of the disc towards the upper rim. Relentless. Unstoppable.

The Abbess screams.







There is a man with a
sword.

There is the pressure
and coldness of metal-
on-flesh binding her
wrists.

She turns her head.

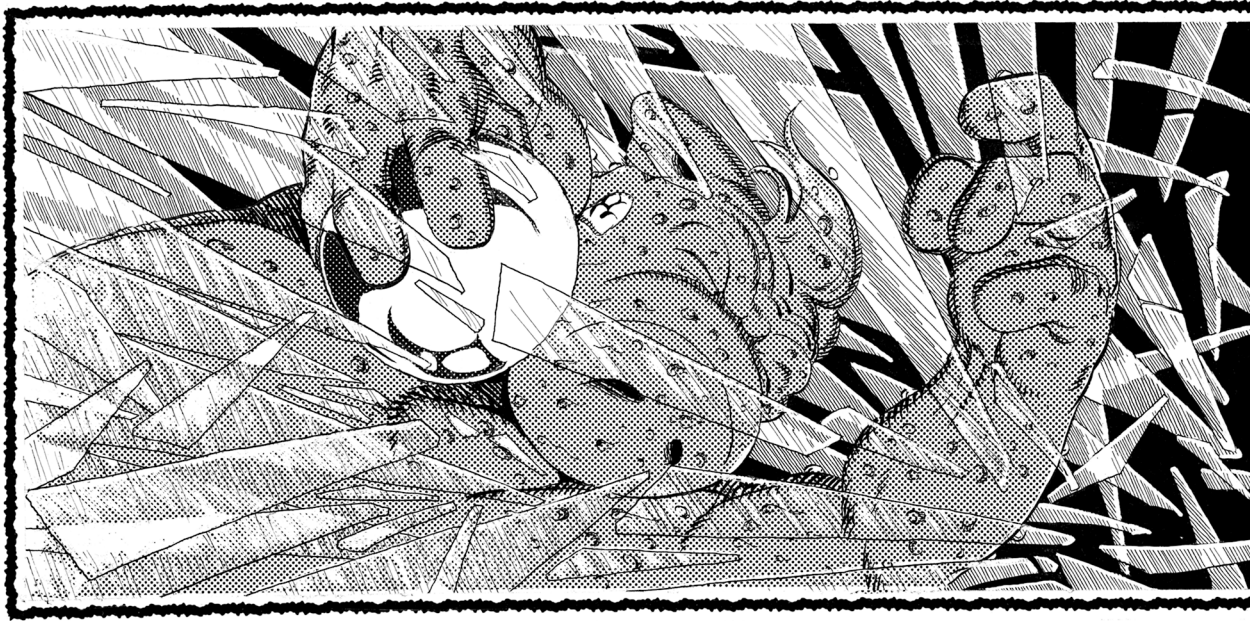
Someone laughs, far
away.

There is a spoken com-
mand and the sensation
of her own lips moving;
but not of air escaping
from her mouth.

There is a pressure of
flesh on flesh.

"Stop him"

"Stop him"
There is a sound of
breaking glass.





On the second floor of the small hotel, to the left, just past the stairs, in a small, sparsely furnished room lies a corpse, a short ceremonial knife thousands upon thousands of years old jutting awkwardly from its chest; the tendrils of blood encrusting the weapon have gone black and hard.

Most of one wall is missing. The dank air is cold and still.

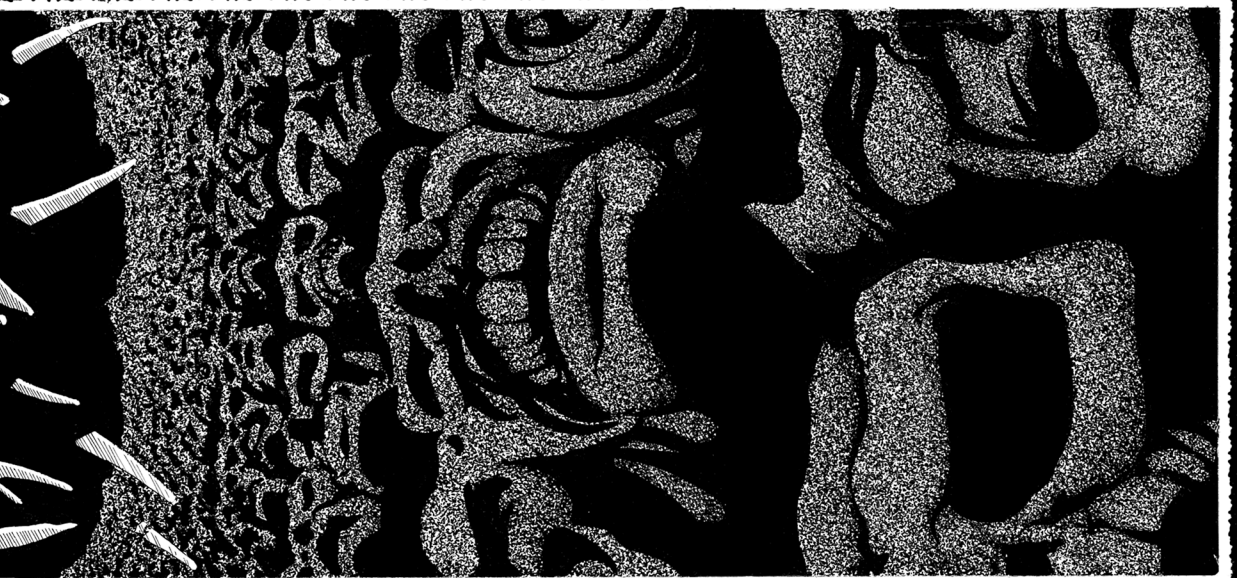
In the courtyard below, thousands of human forms, immobile, their breathing shallow, listen in vain for any sign of impending release.

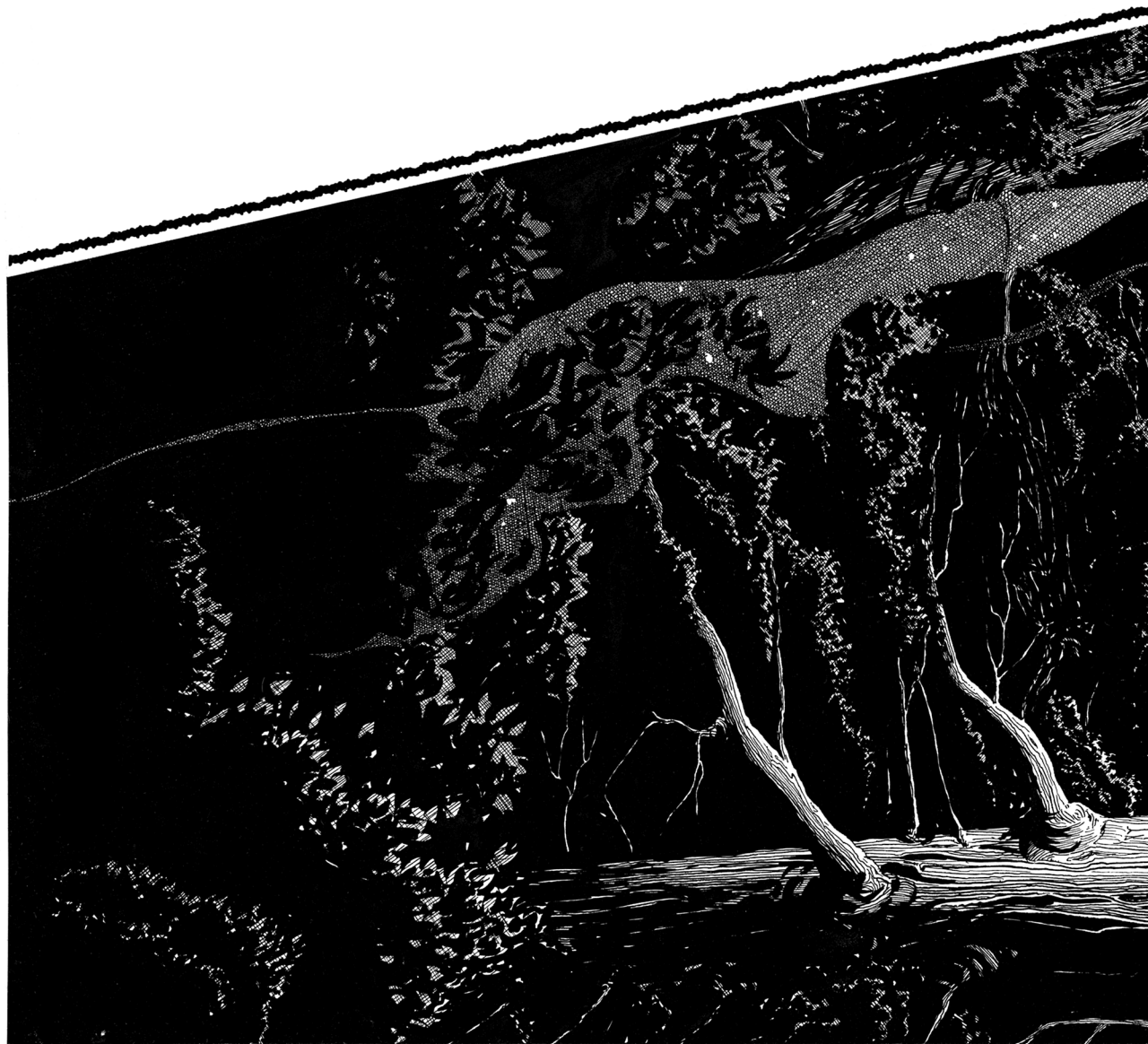
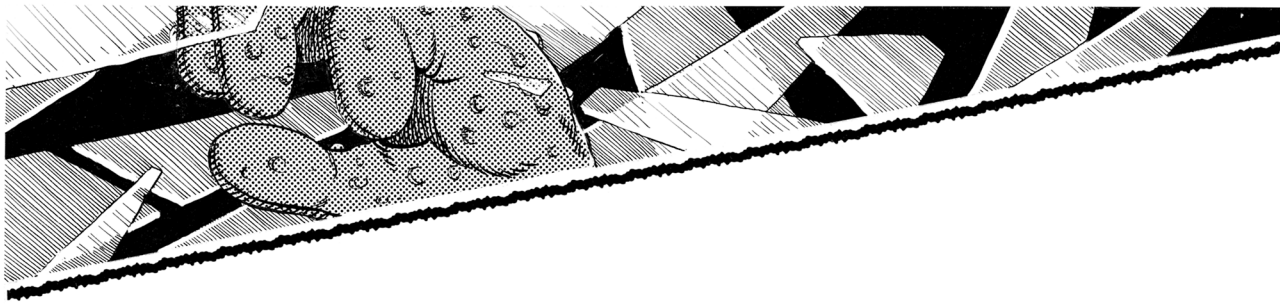
There is a distant sound of breaking glass.

The lips of the corpse begin to move.

Decaying flesh and muscle pull the lip up and across its mate, exposing blackened gums, stretching, splitting slightly at the driest points. It is not clear what word is being formed.

Then, once more, all is still.





At the periphery of his vision, out beyond the enfolding darkness of those branches Bear sees the his cooking fire, hears the leaves the little people, hears the rustle at their passing, smells of unexplained their scent mingling sep-
presence, cooking smells; now sep-
arate; now joined once more.

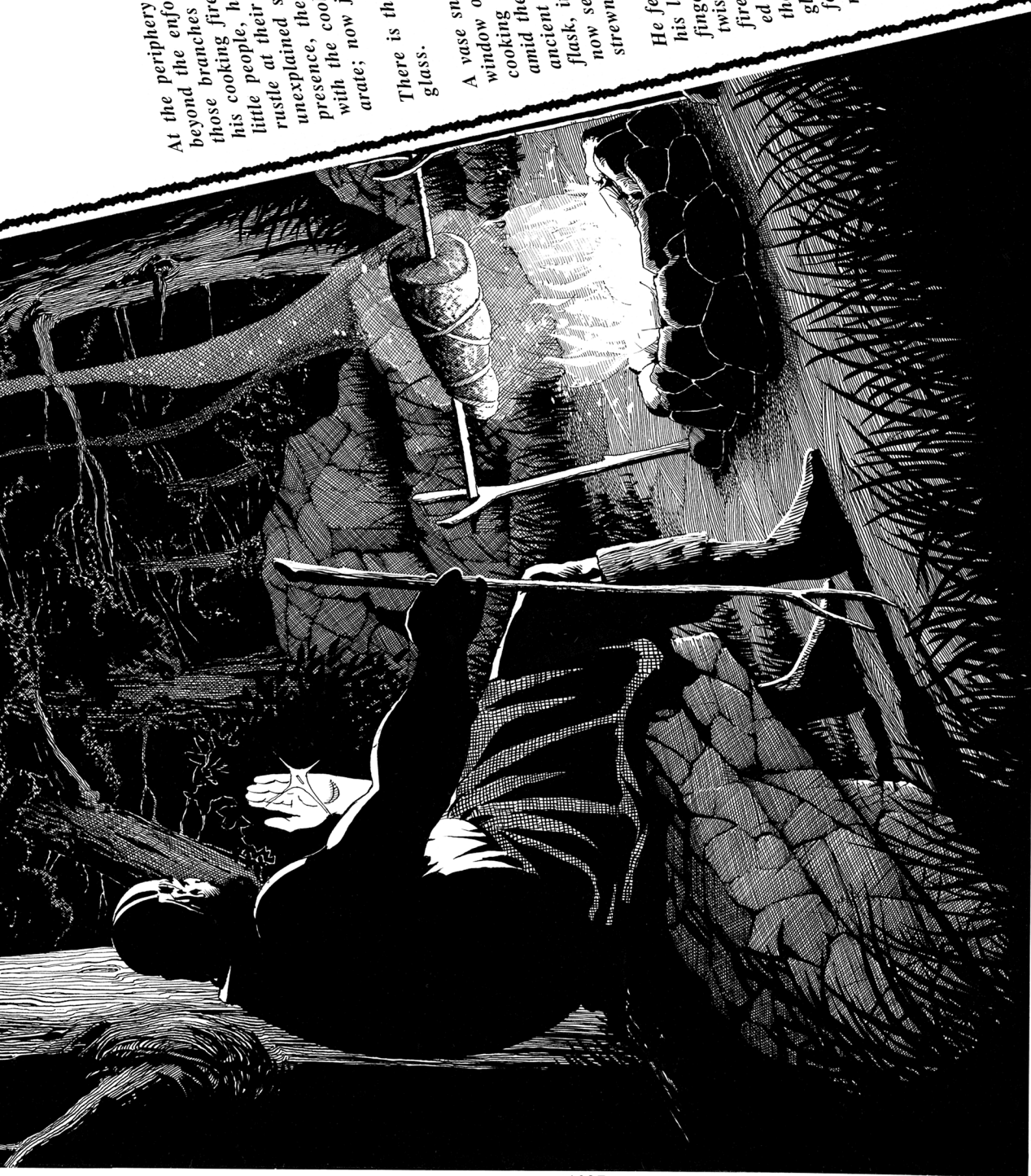
There is the sound of breaking glass.

A vase snatched through the open window of a cottage too hastily cooking pot tangled roots of these amid the trees? A finely-shaped flask, its rare and exotic contents now seeping into the mossy leaf-
strewn floor of these woods?

He feels a sharp pain in the little his left hand, below the hand, finger. He examines and that in the twisting it this way and that of glass firelight; sees the small shard of another ed light in the smallness, then another there, He stares at the without glint. He long time it out and moving. Then plucks it out and hurls it into the fire.

Little people, he thinks.

No doubt about it.

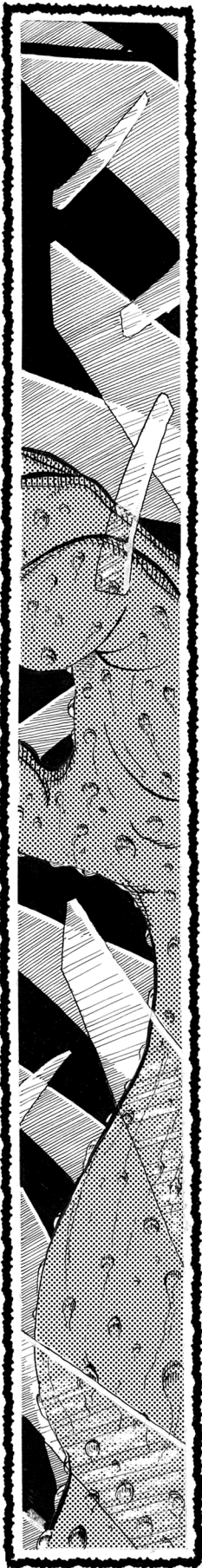


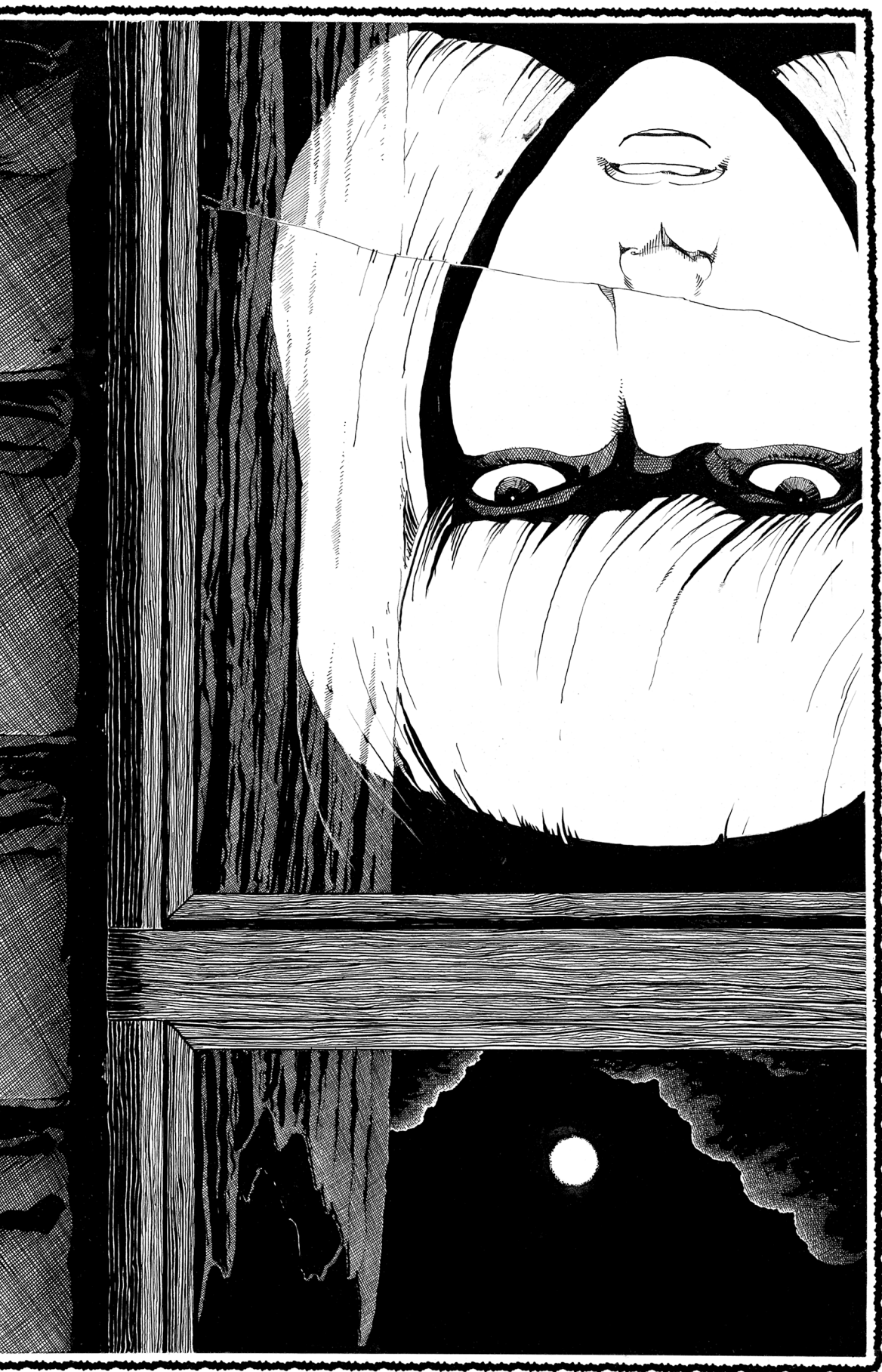
Jaka feels the delicate seepage of night
 air on her cheek, her breath lightly fog-
 ging the window. She holds still; so
 very, very still, convinced that some
 trick of perspective -- some optical illu-
 sion -- is at work. It is several minutes
 before she will acknowledge to herself
 that there is no trick, no illusion. The
 Tower is growing and it is growing at a
 phenomenal rate.

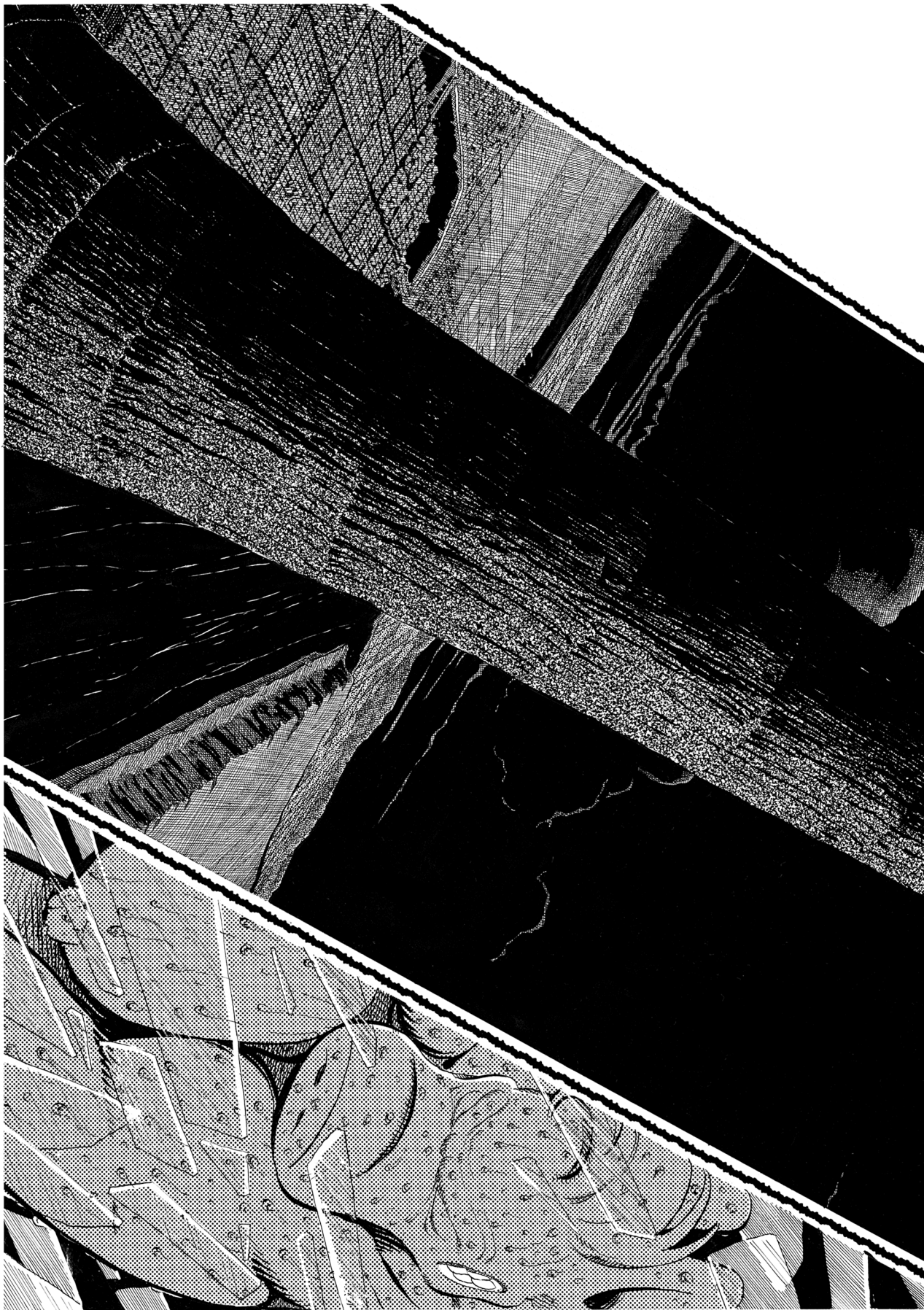
From the next room she can hear the
 sounds of drunken revelry, the clash of
 coins, slurred wagers. She feels a slight
 tremor in the soles of her feet, hears the
 musical rattling of the two china cups on
 the bureau.


With a grinding and granular snap, a
 crack forms across the width of the
 window.

Even then, her gaze never wavers.









The sudden chill of night air
on his damp fur and a feeling
of disorientation assail the
Earth-pig as he tumbles
through open space, his left
arm flailing.

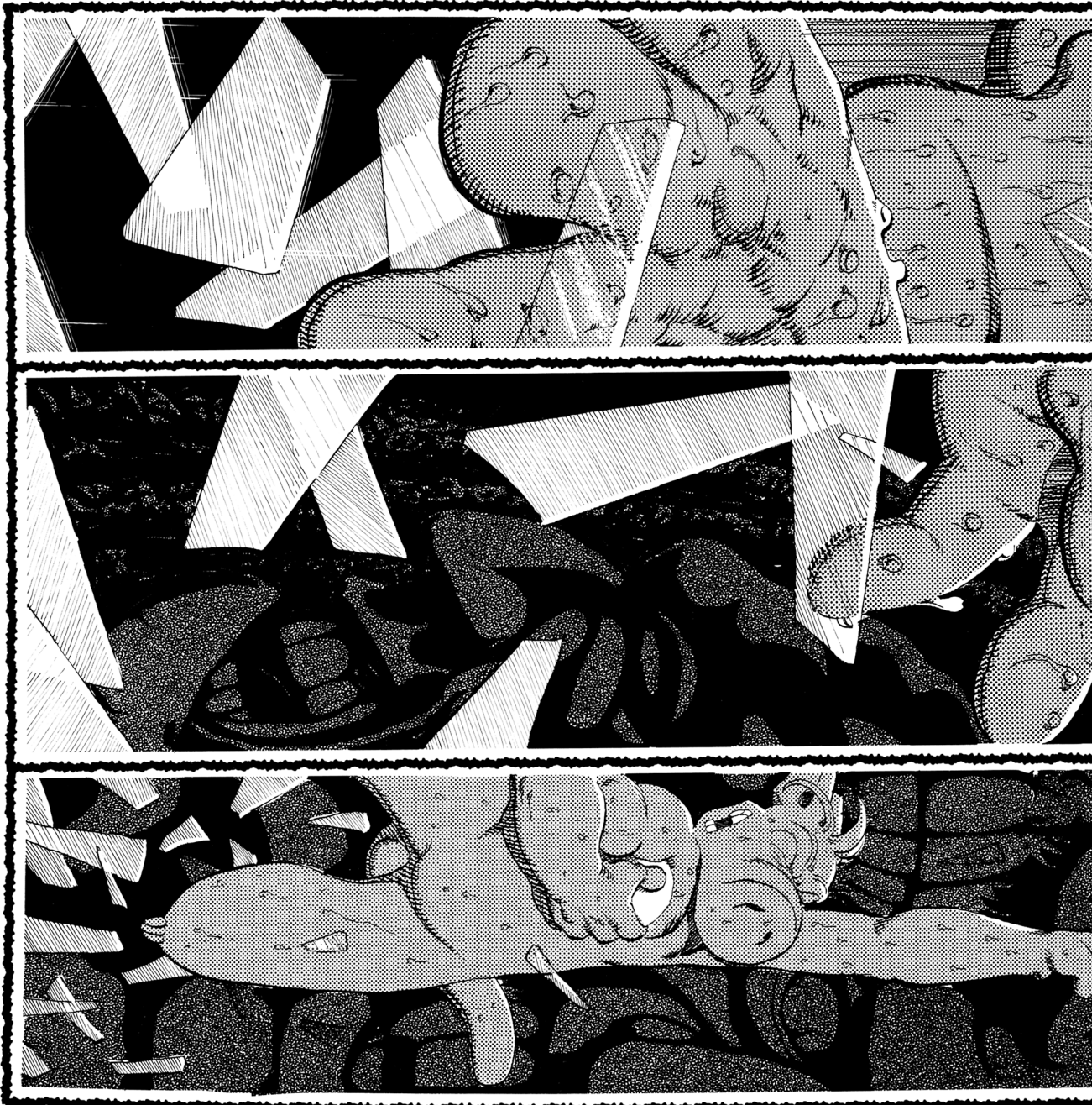
He hears a roar, like that
from a sea shell, grow from
the echoing disintegration of
the window; becomes a con-
fused panion to the glittering
fragments as, for a moment,
he and they hang suspended
between the ancient church
and the leering wall of
grotesqueries.

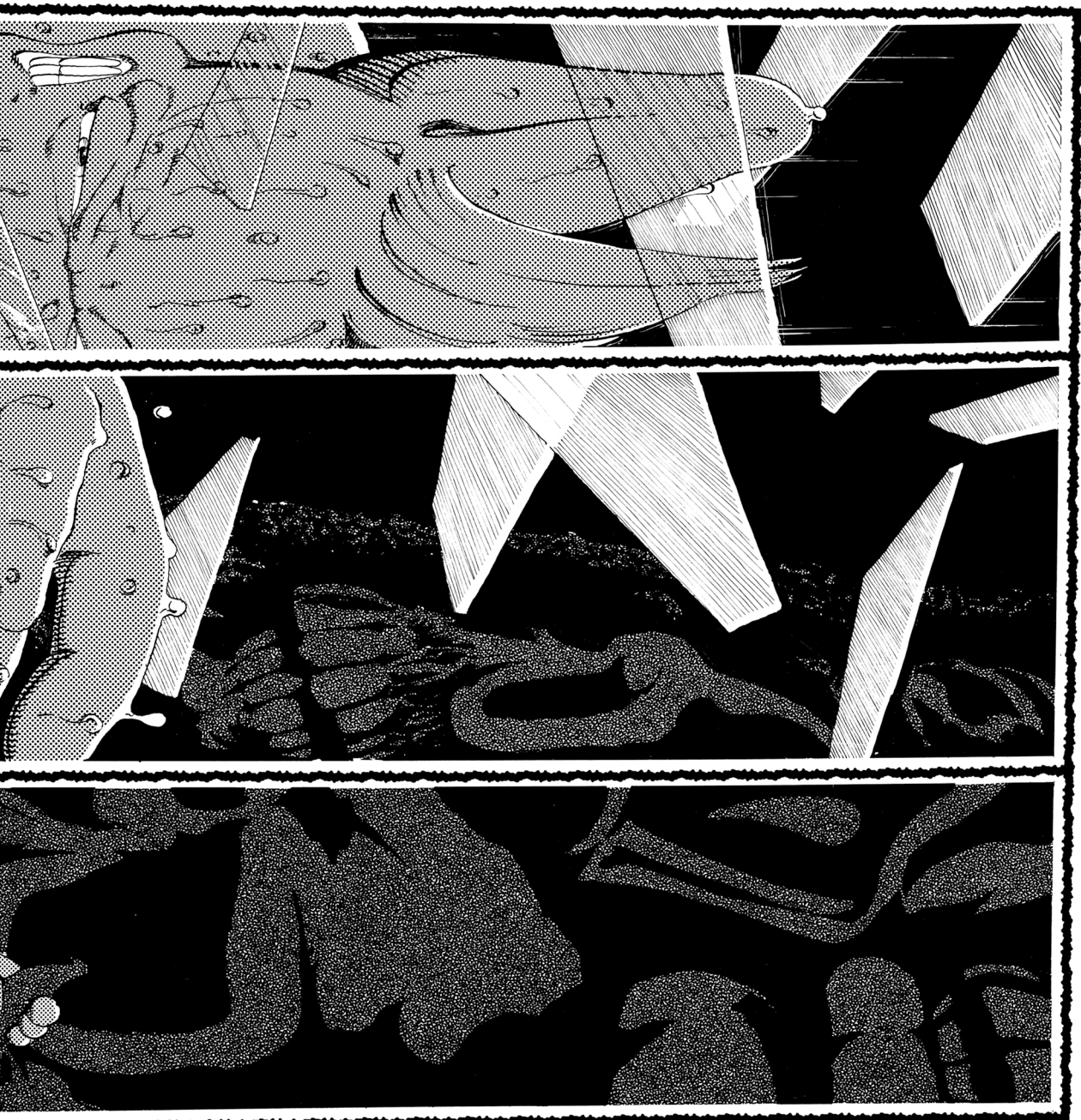
Down, he plunges in a gentle arc, some glassy shards streaking past him, most falling with him, frozen in eccentric patterns. Squinting, he sees the droplets of his sweat rise from the back of his hand. Squinting, he flings the hand outward.

Even as blackened stone touches palm, his grip is secure; with a muscle-wrenching tug, his fall is arrested.

The splinters and fragments continue their descent alone.

The ever-increasing roar dwarfs even his mounting fear.







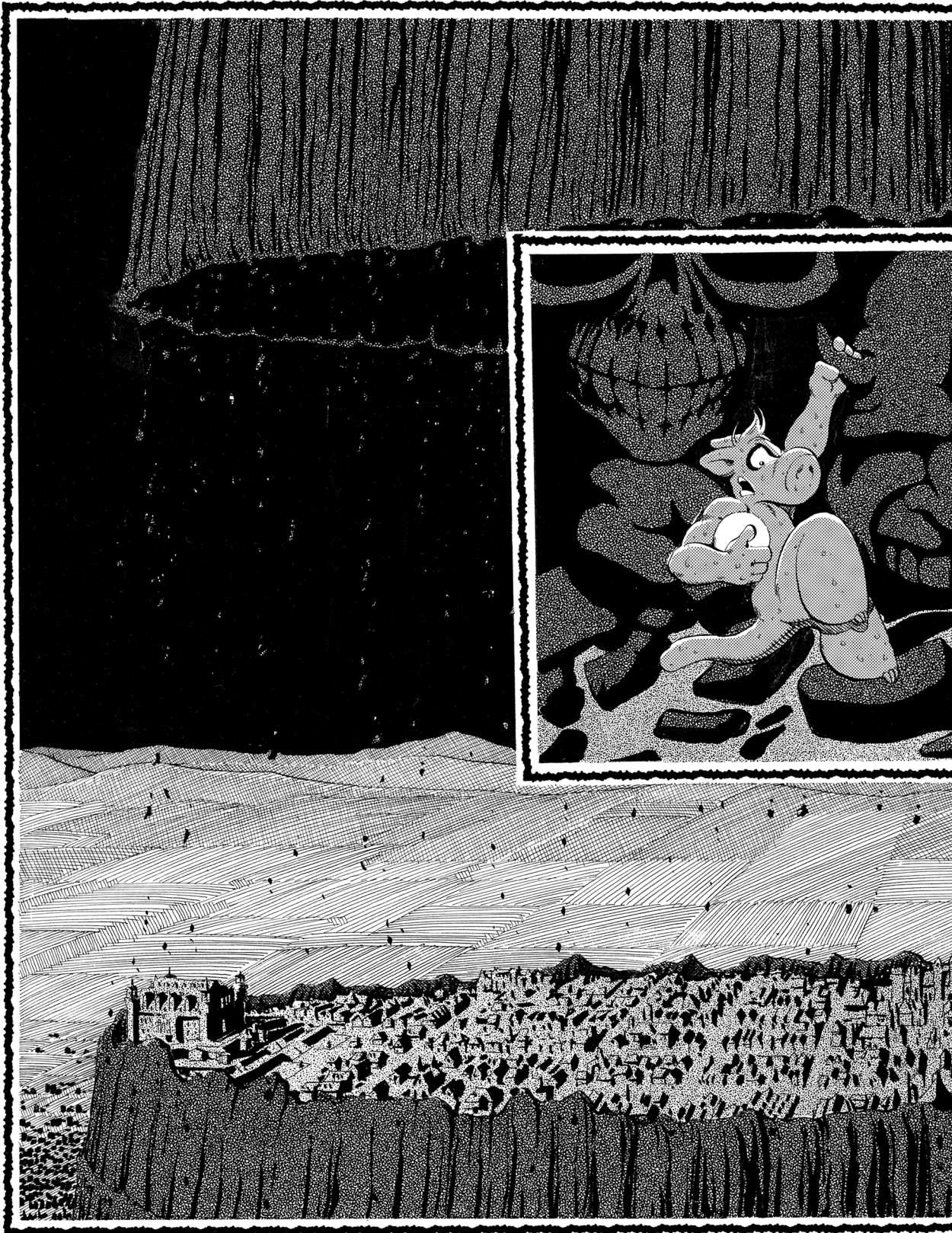
Blakely gazes in
horror down the wide
expanse of Concordance
Boulevard in the direction
of the Regency Hotel. A tremor
displaces cobblestones in a fan-shaped
wave for several hundred yards. The deaf-
ening roar rises in pitch and volume, explosion
overlapping explosion, thunder bounding and re-
bounding across the encircling mountain of faces.

A seam opens above the row of buildings, stretching instantly
across the full panorama of his sight.

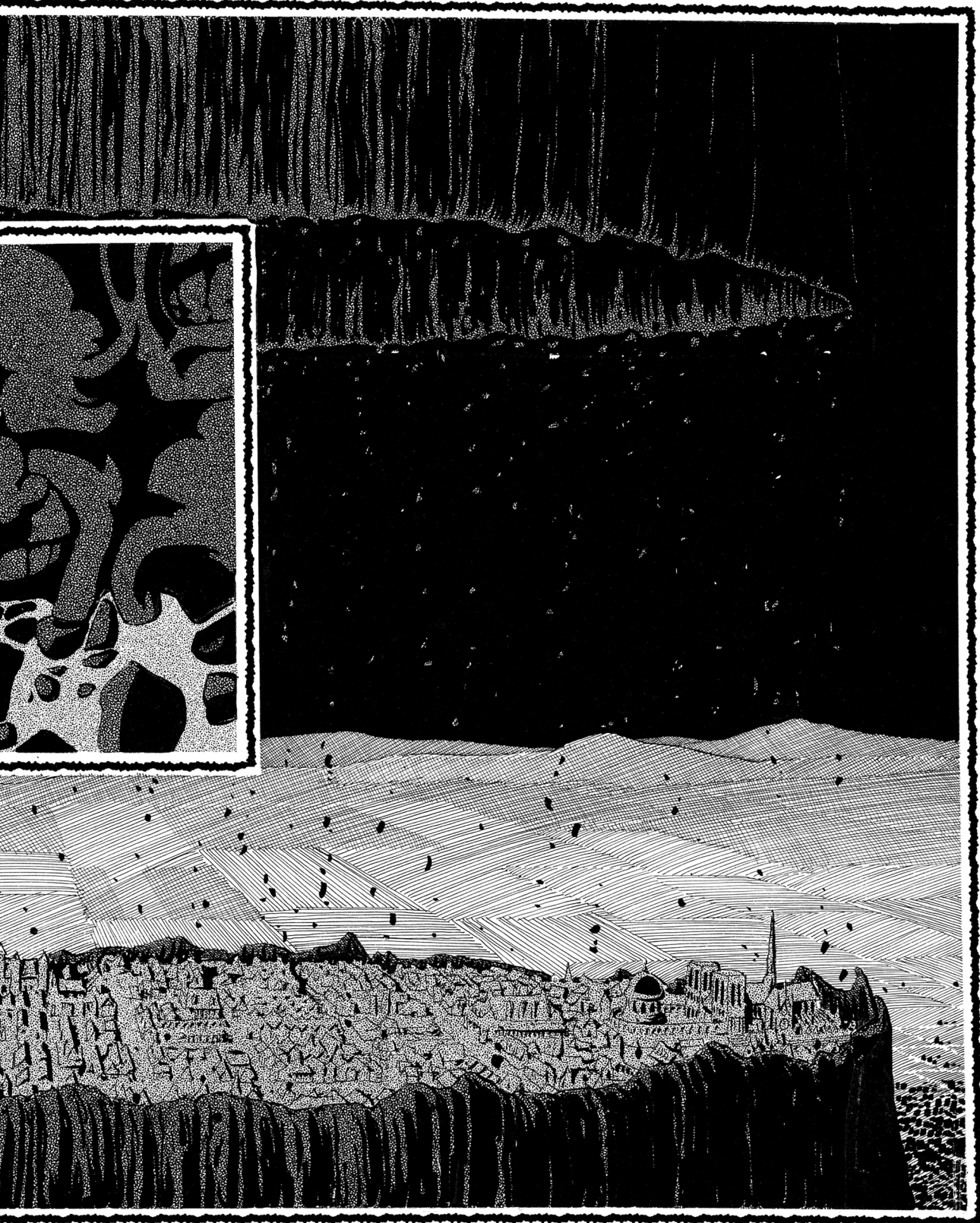
Harmon Blakely begins to pray.



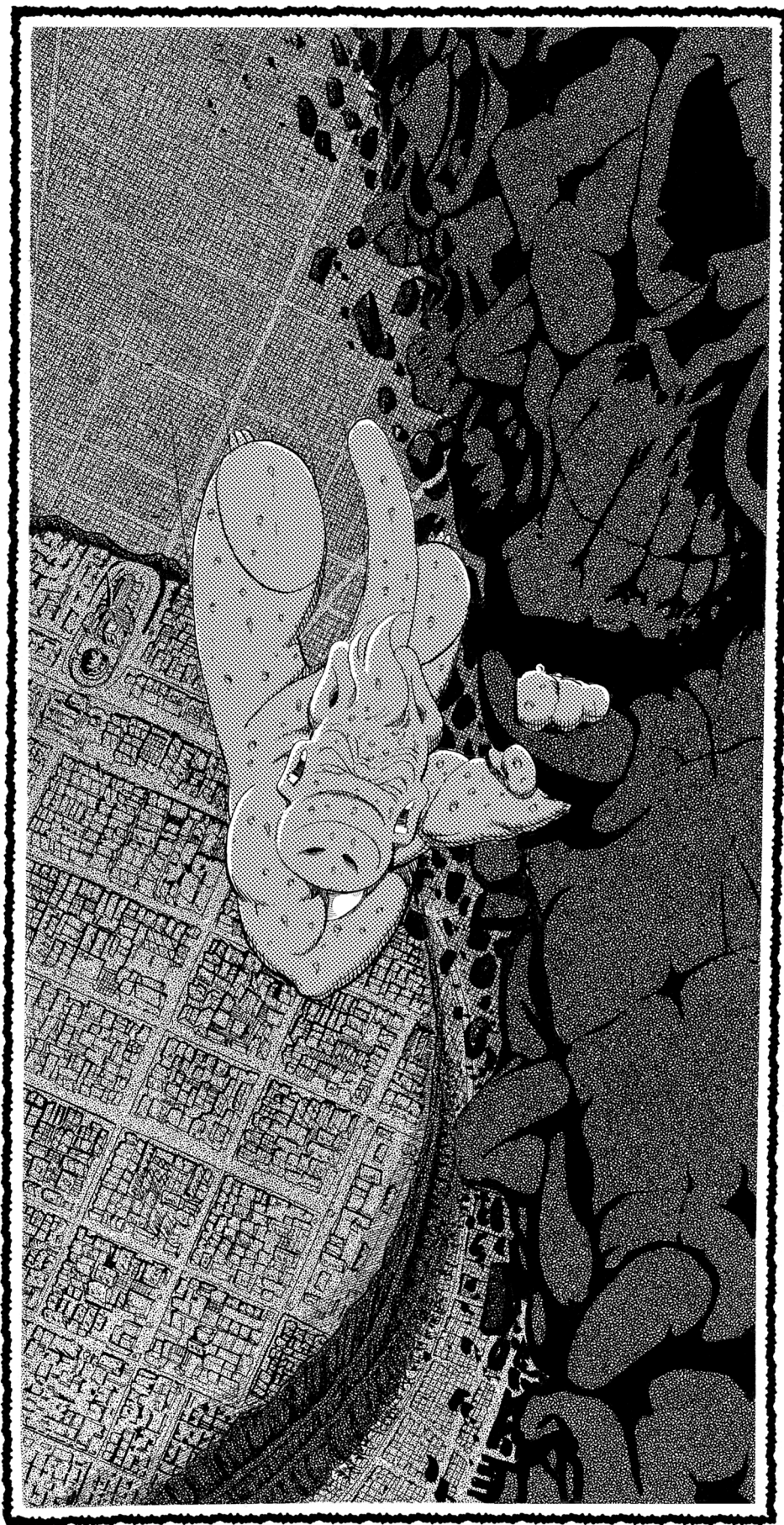
Rising into the night sky, faster and still faster, it is a short moment before the Tower reaches -- then surpasses -- the speed of sound.



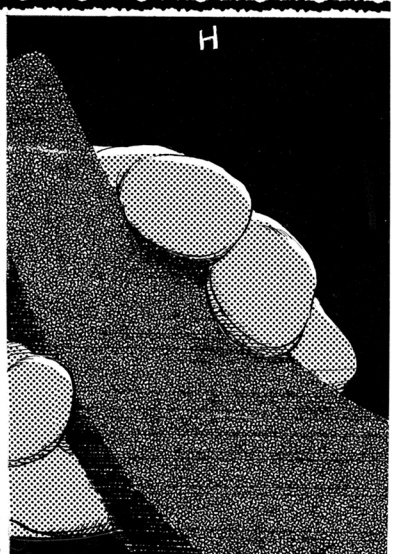
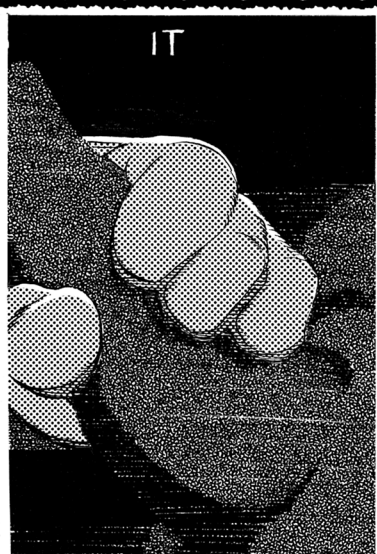
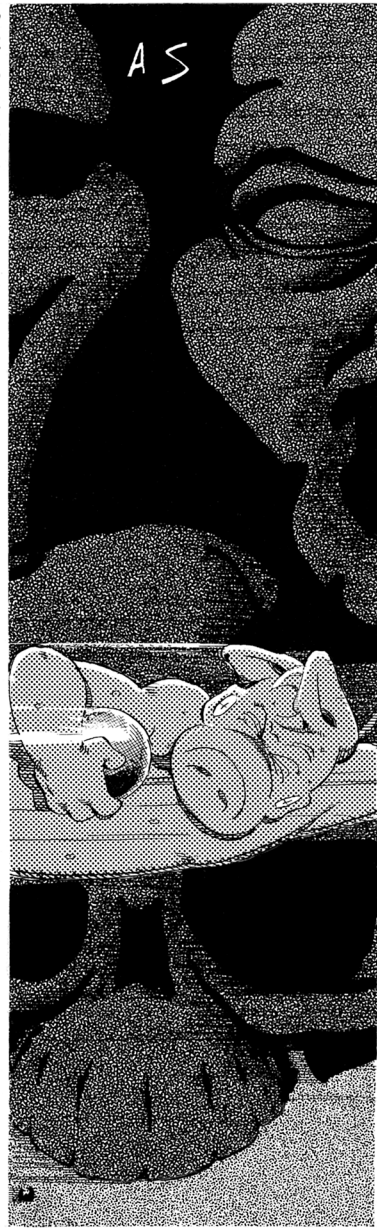
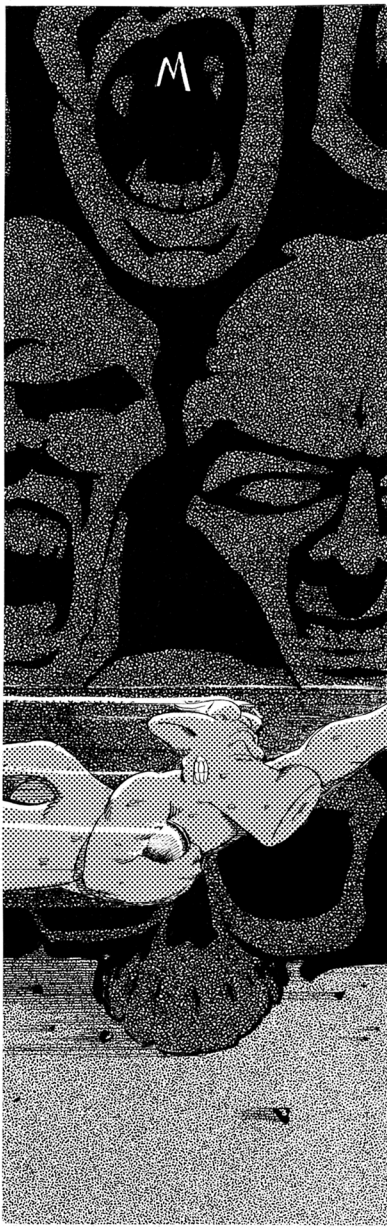
The explosive displacement of air shatters fully half the windows in the Upper City and a third of those in the Lower.

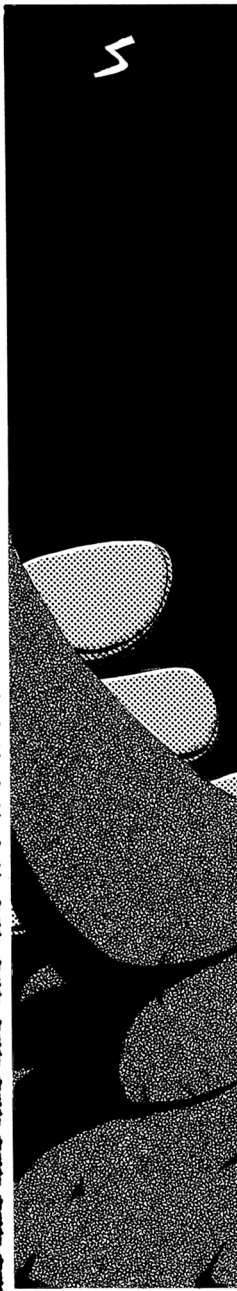
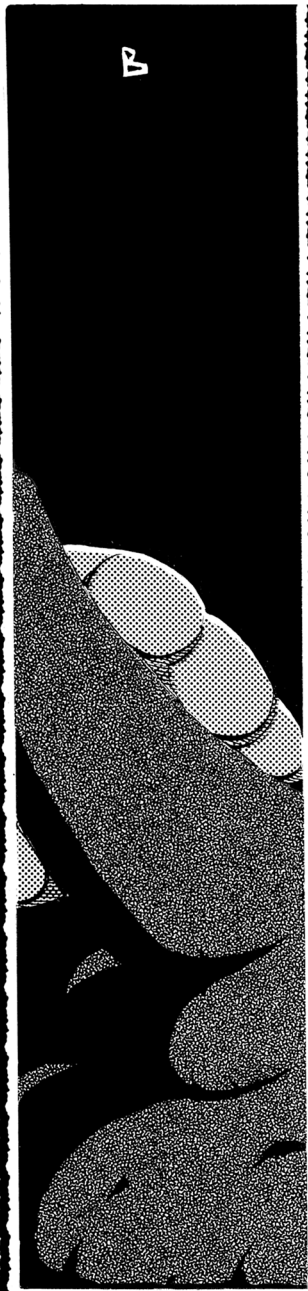
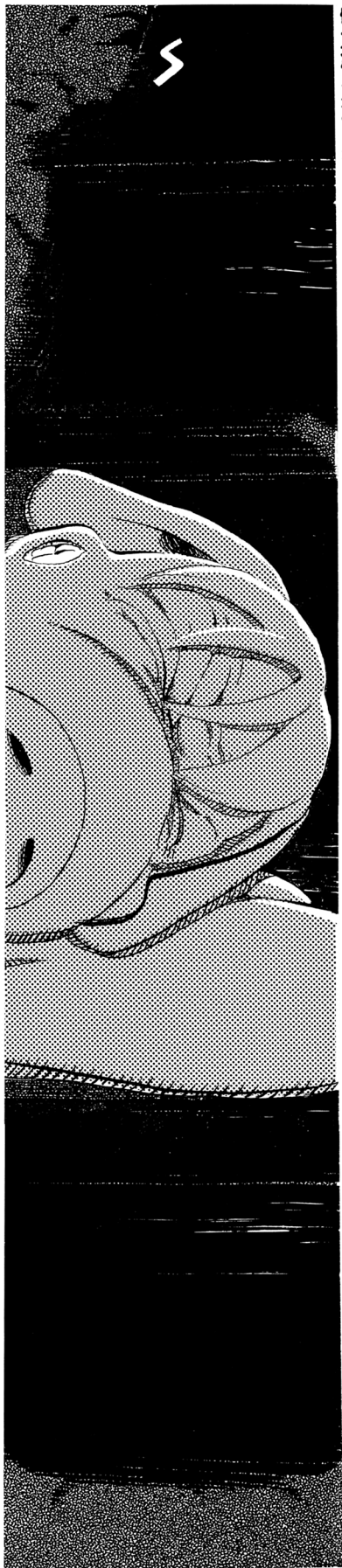


The Earth-pig born hears nothing.

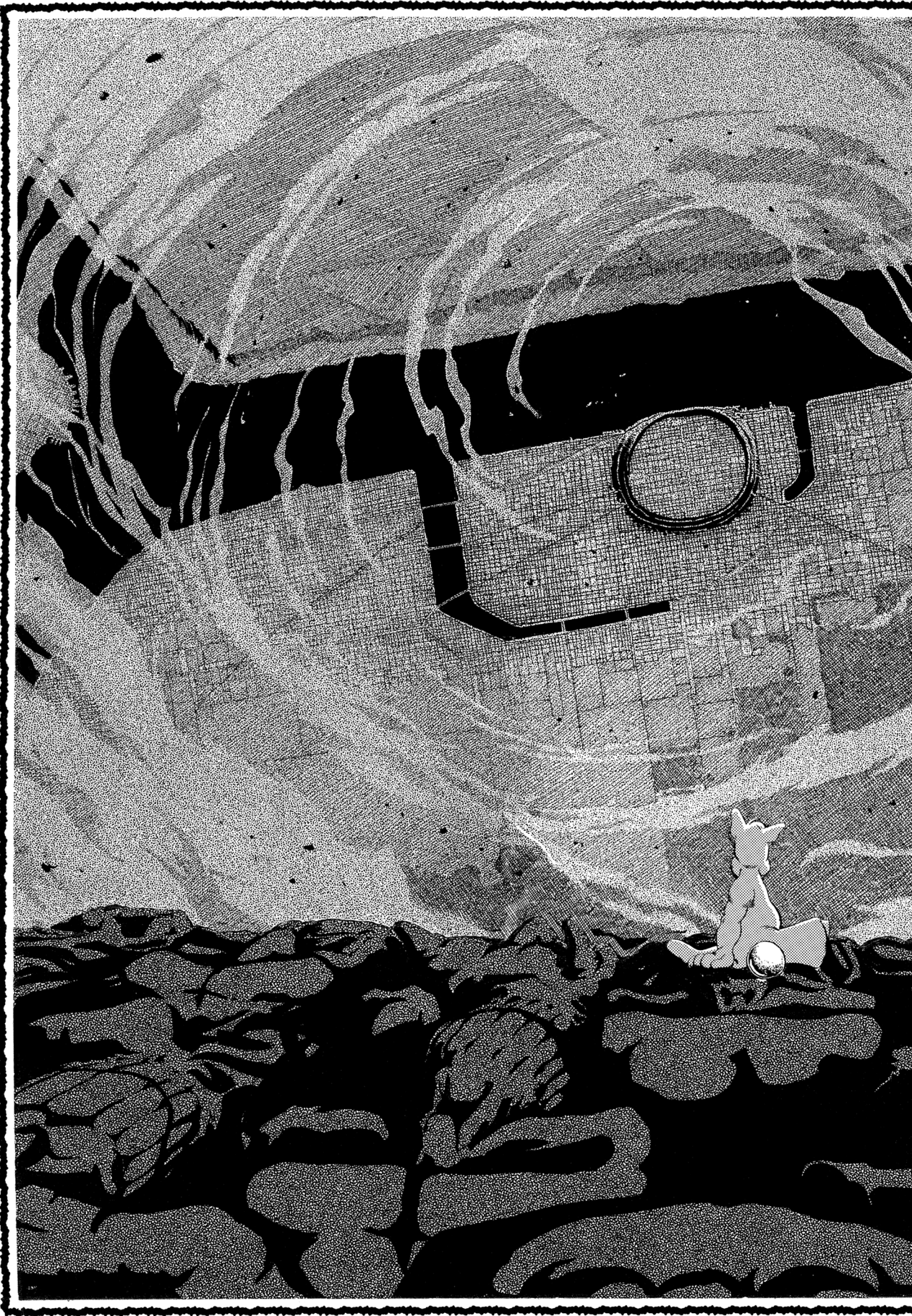


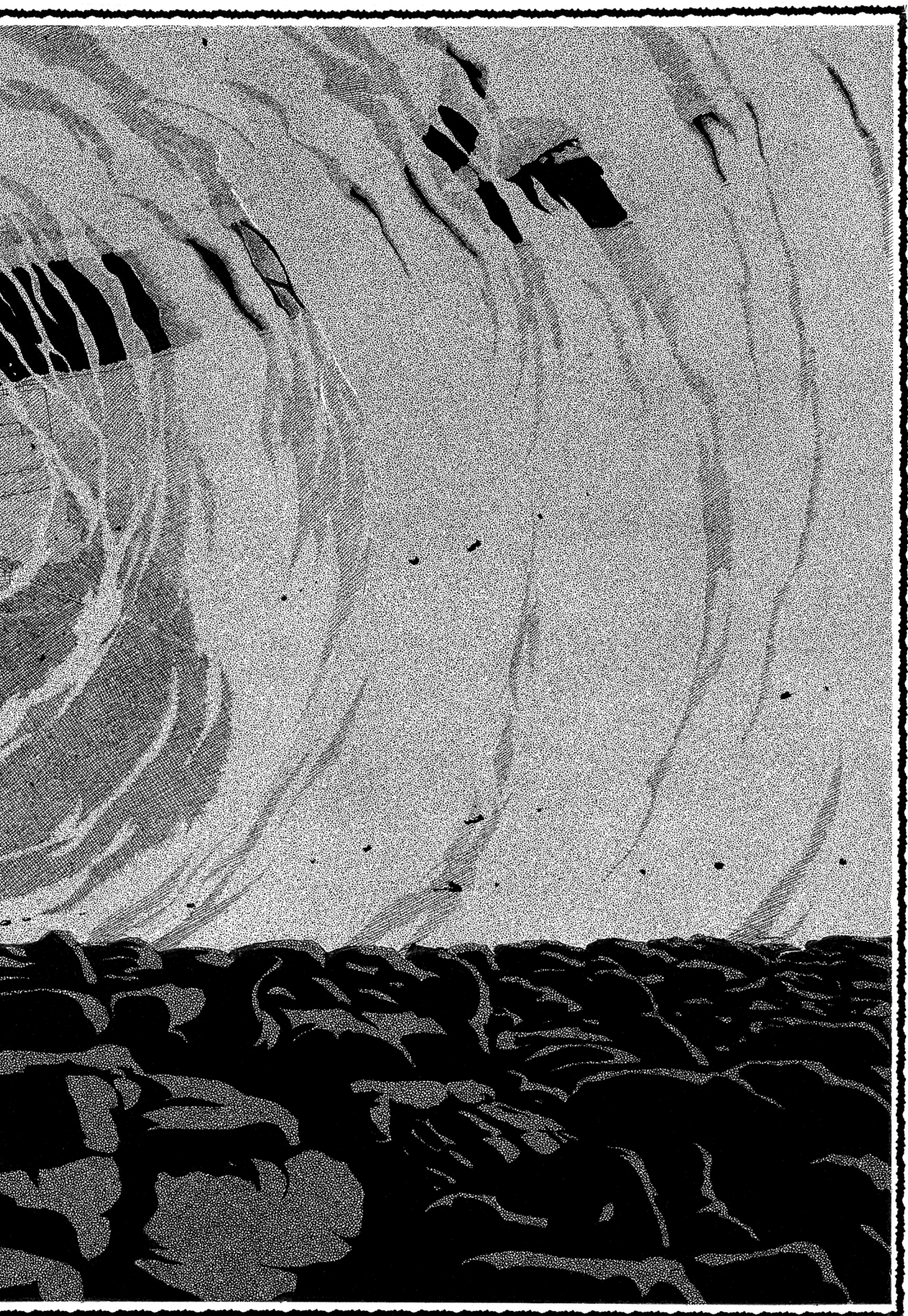
*Accelerating
smoothly, The
Black Tower
begins to revolve.*





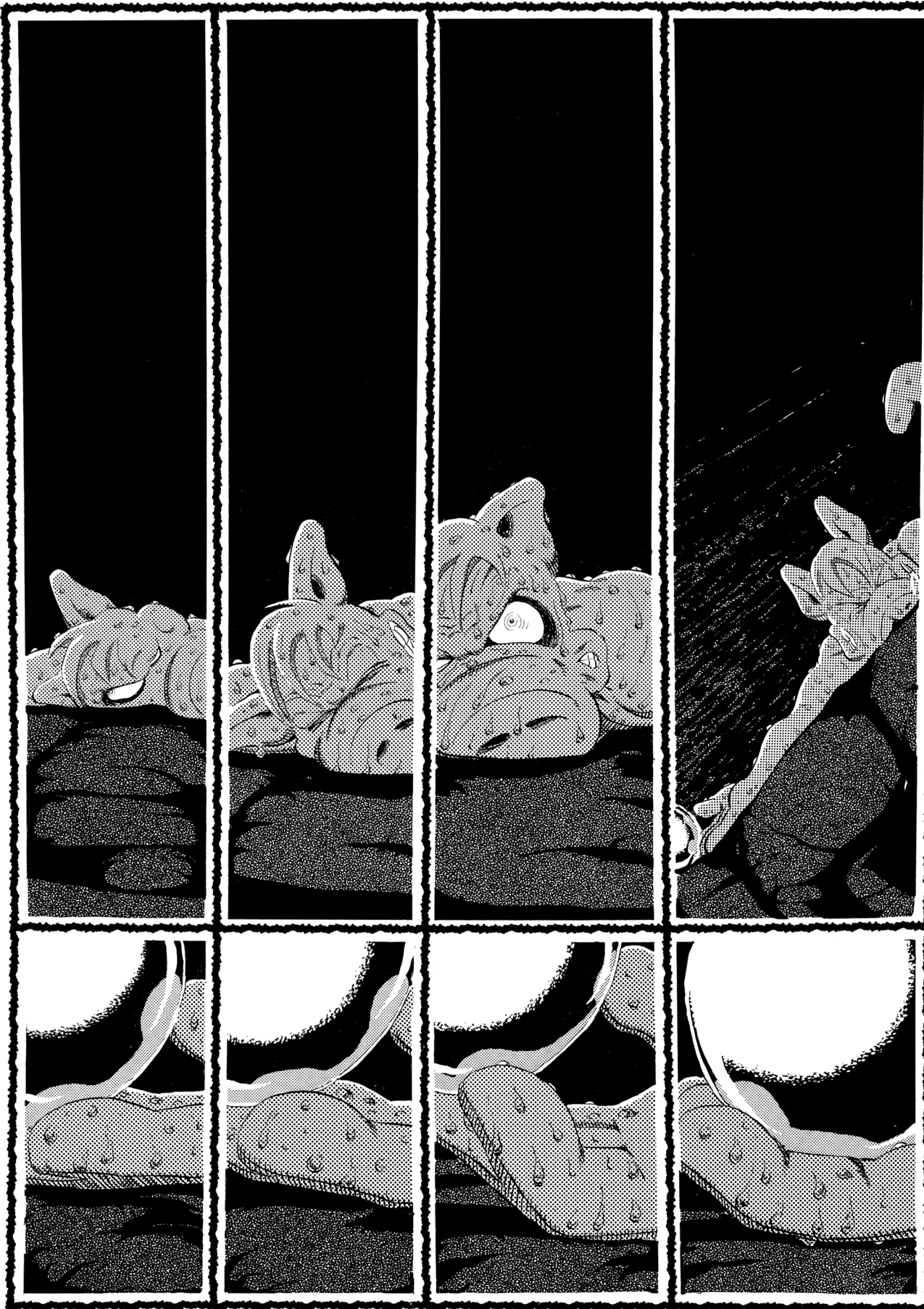






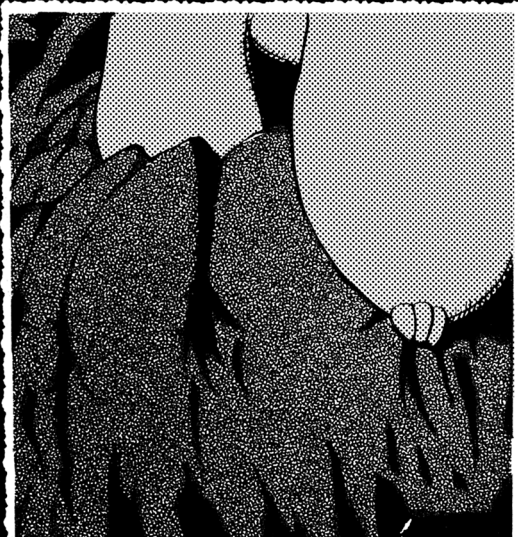
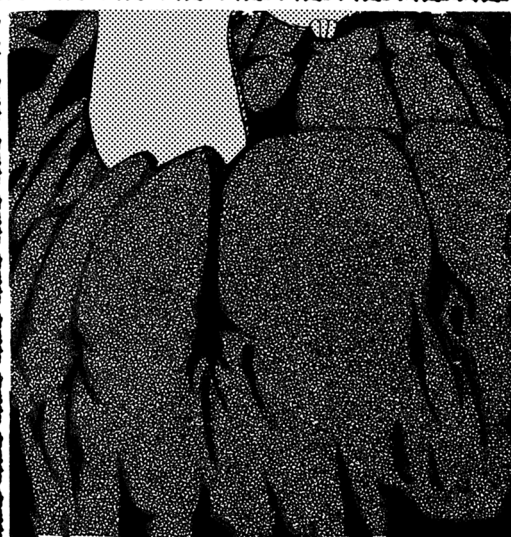
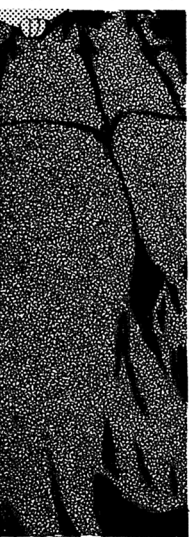


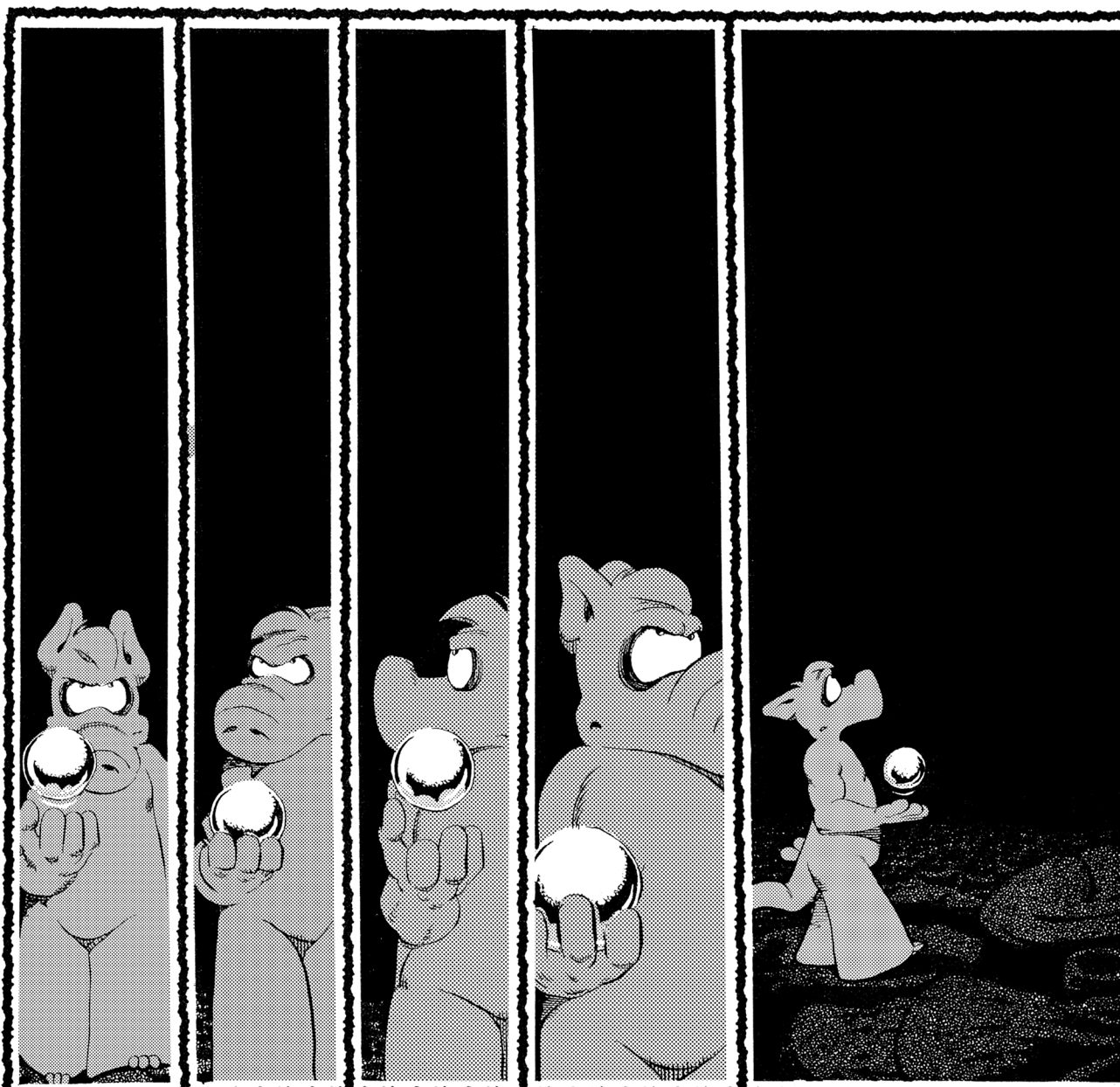








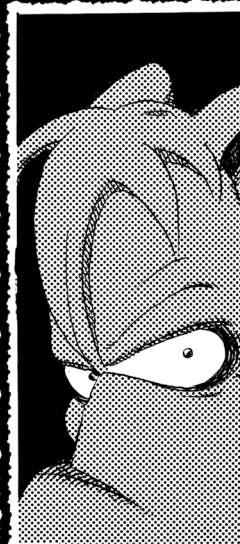
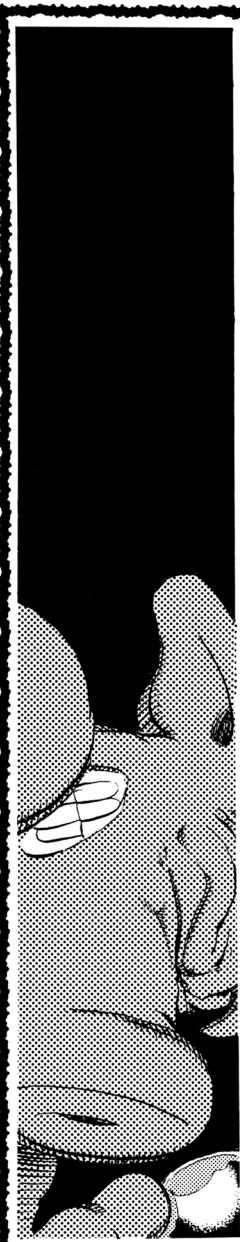
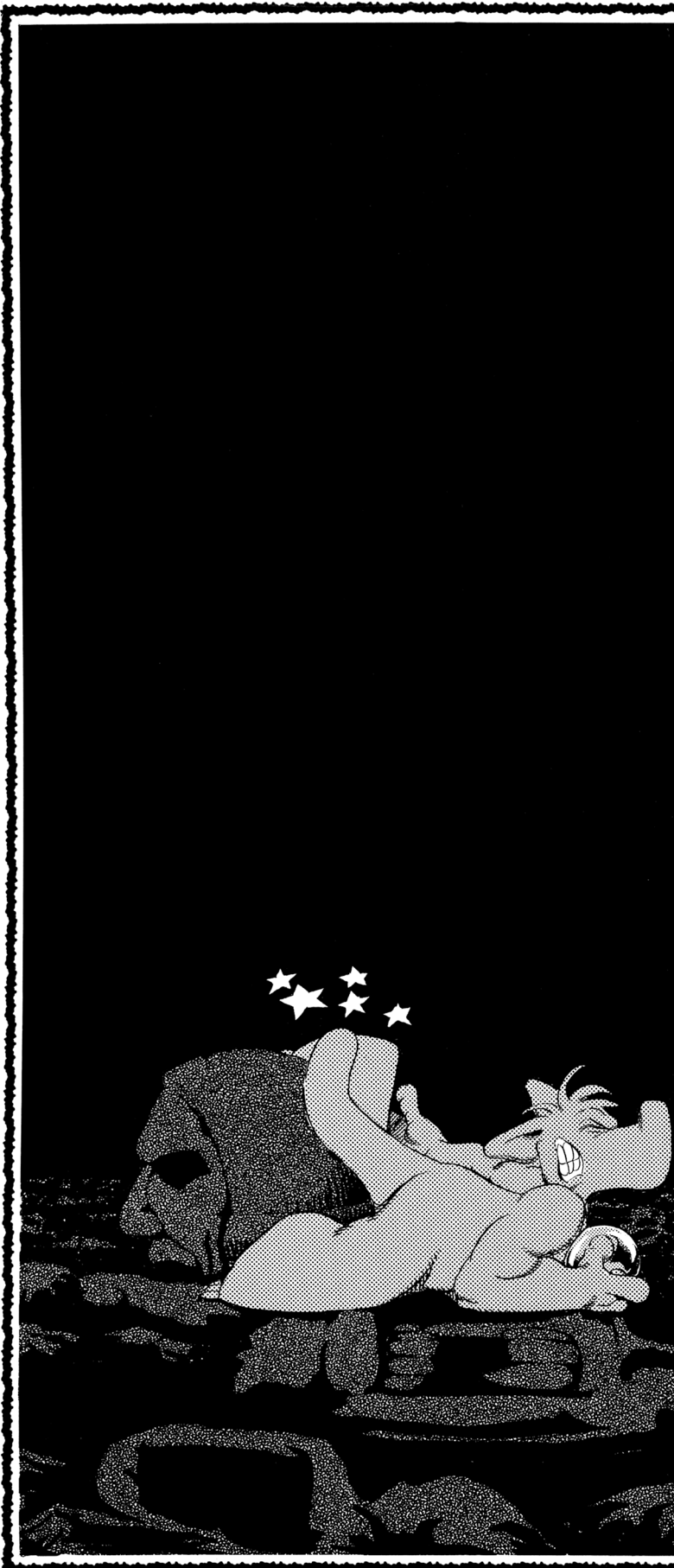


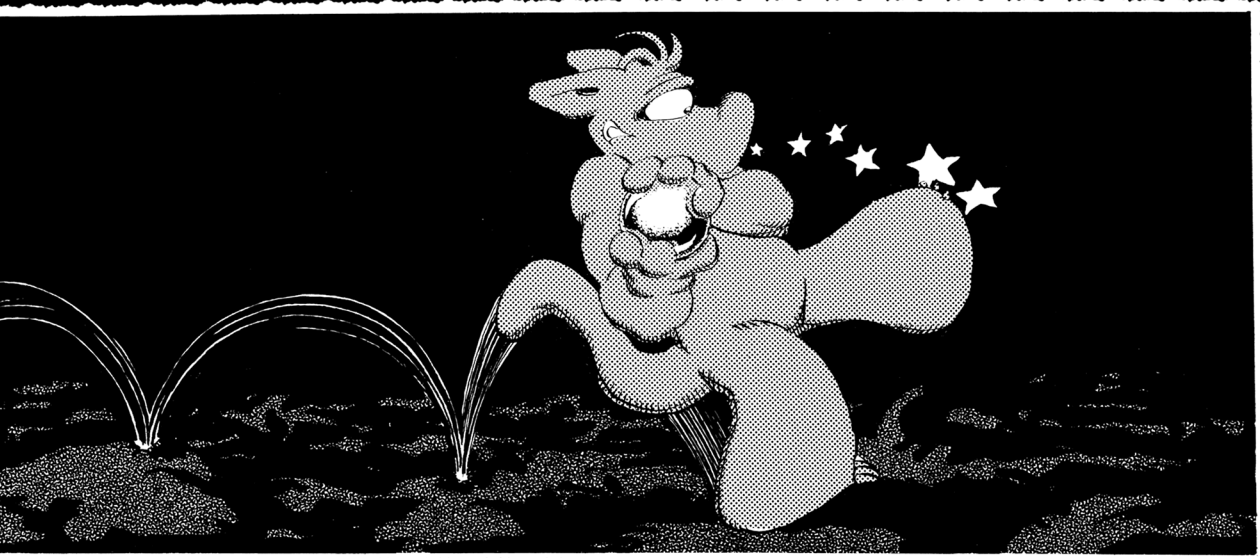
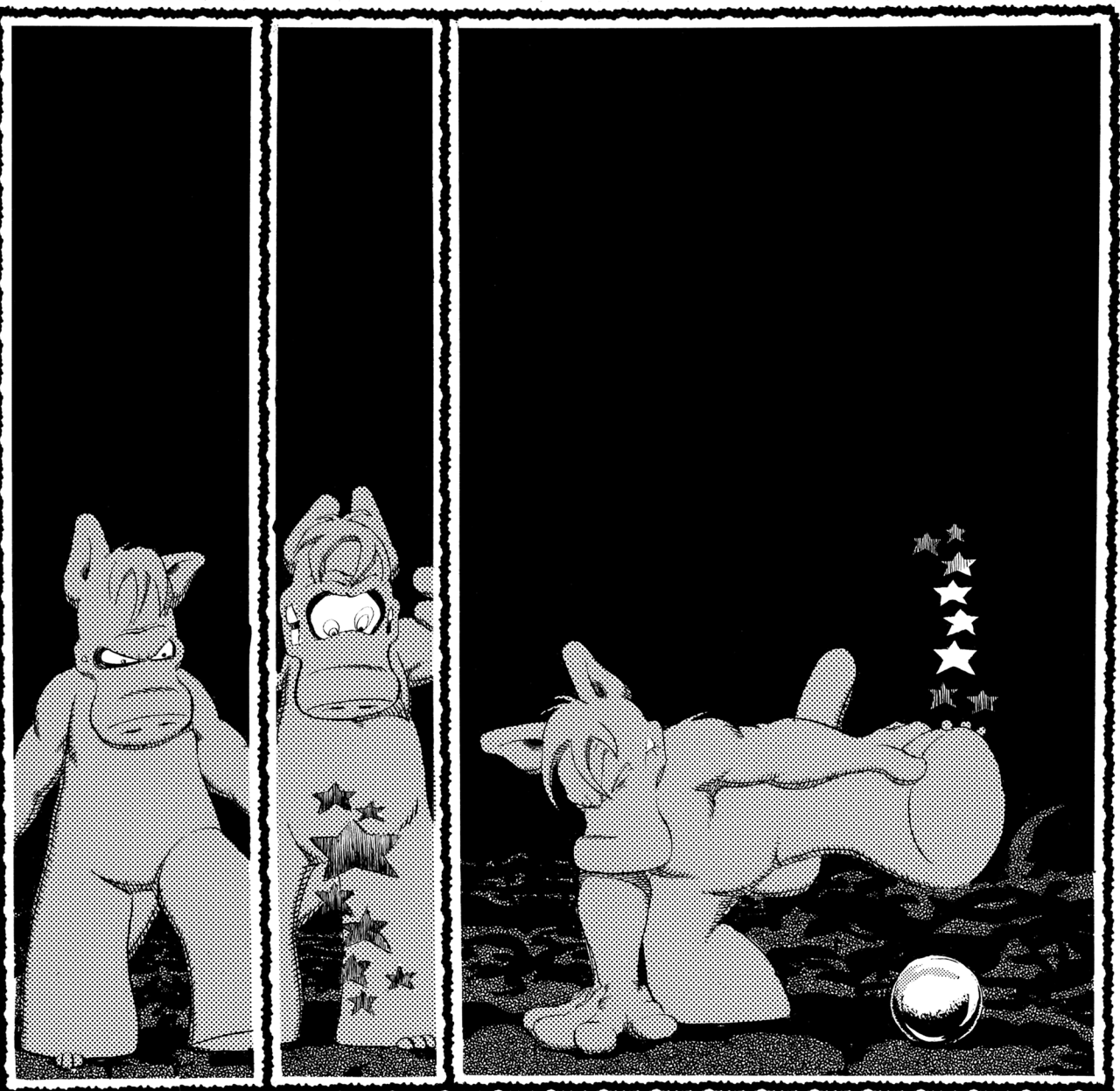




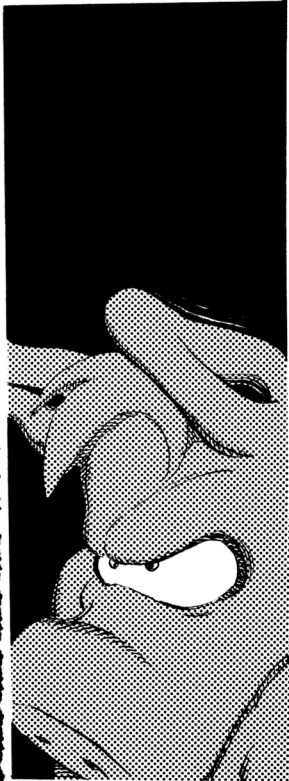
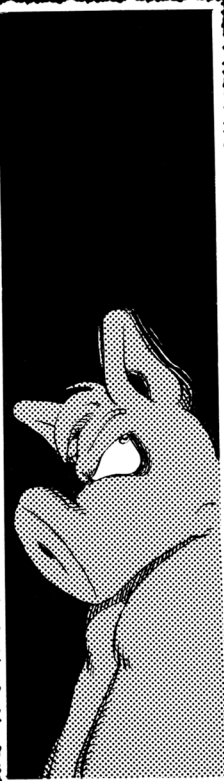
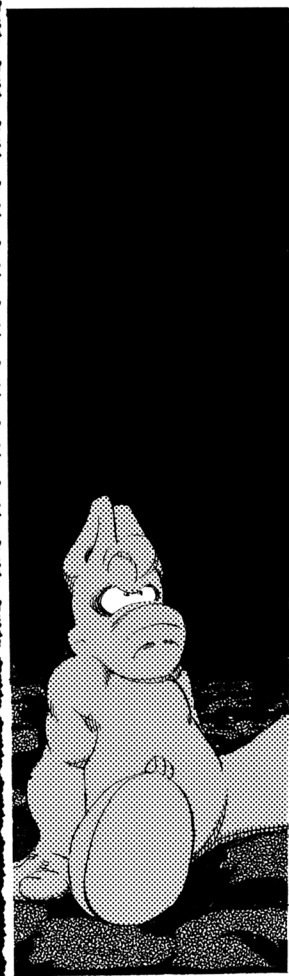
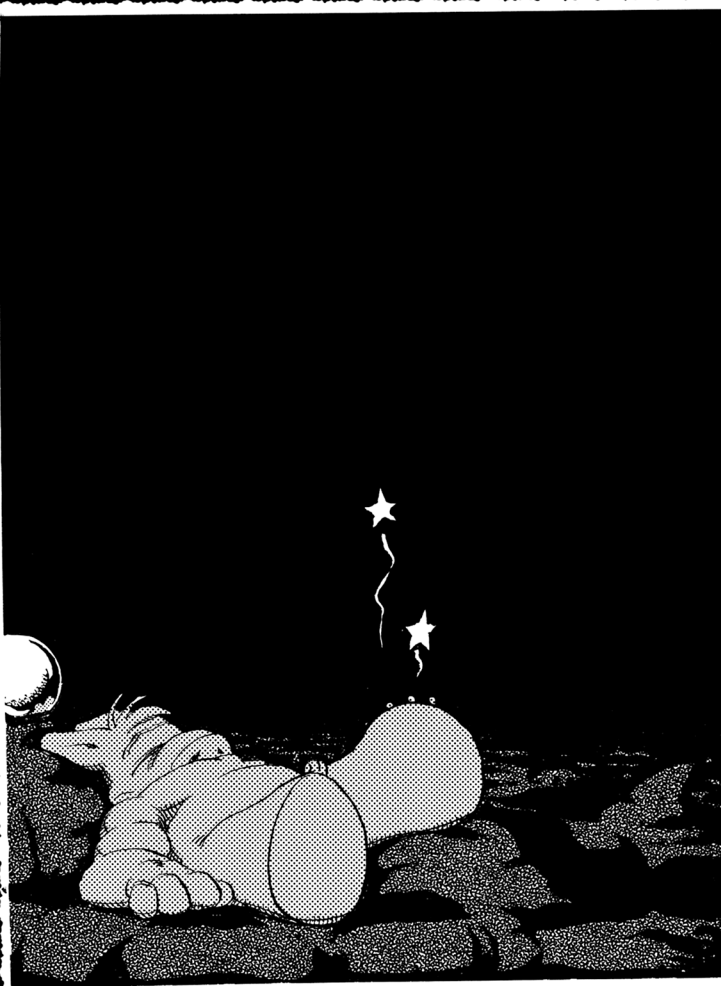








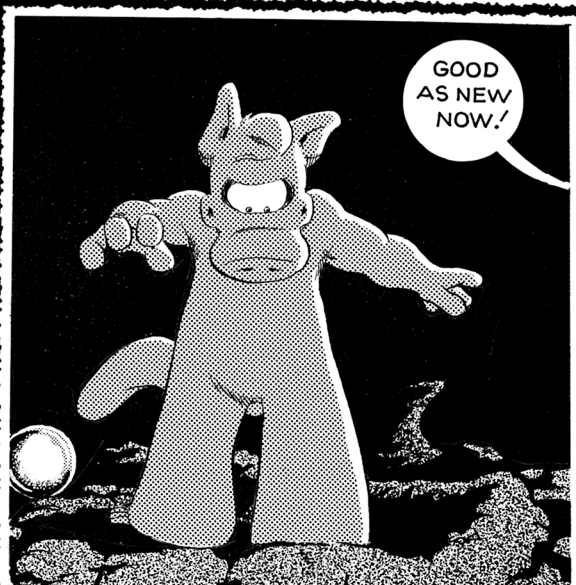
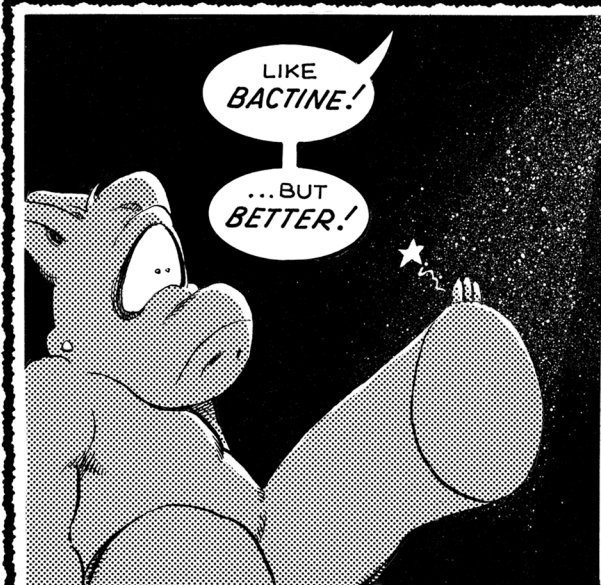
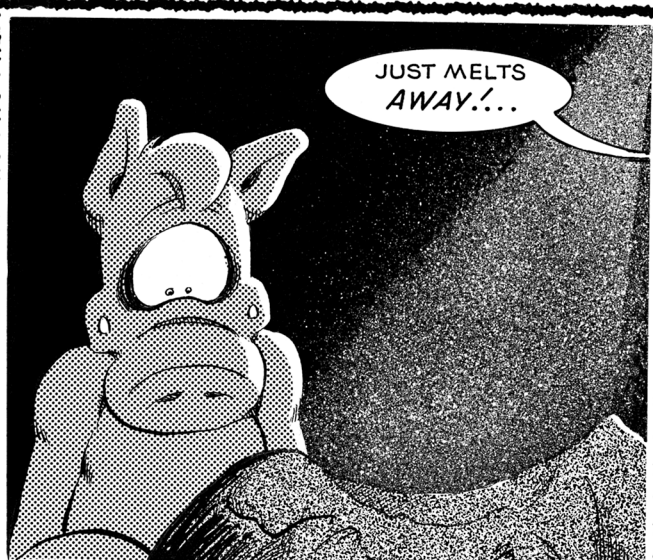
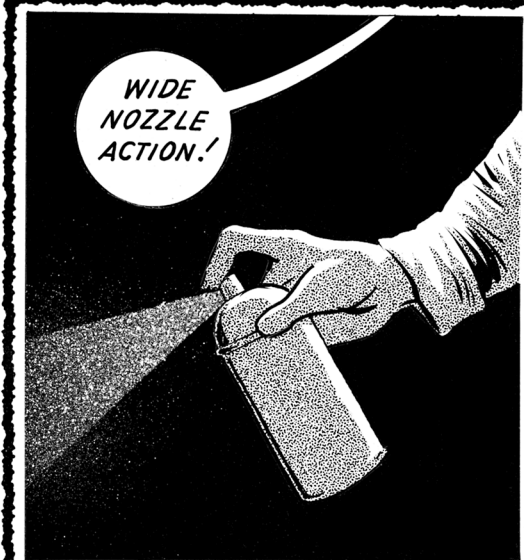
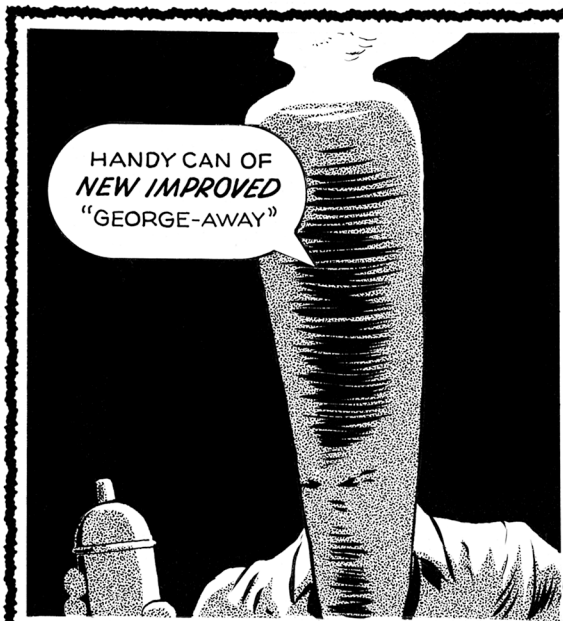


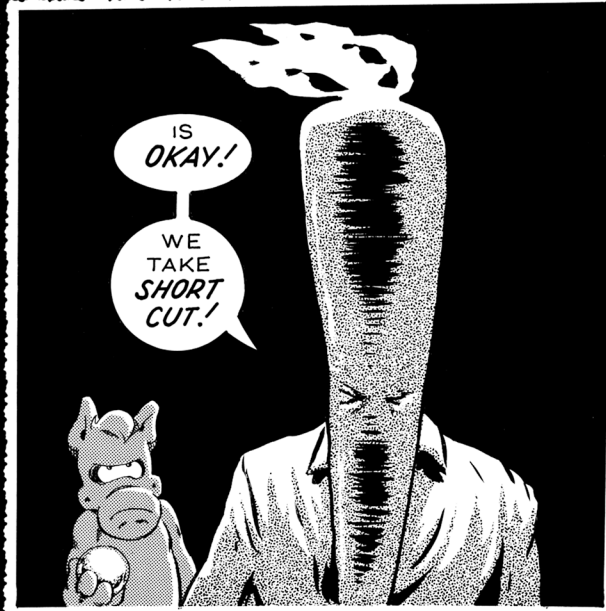
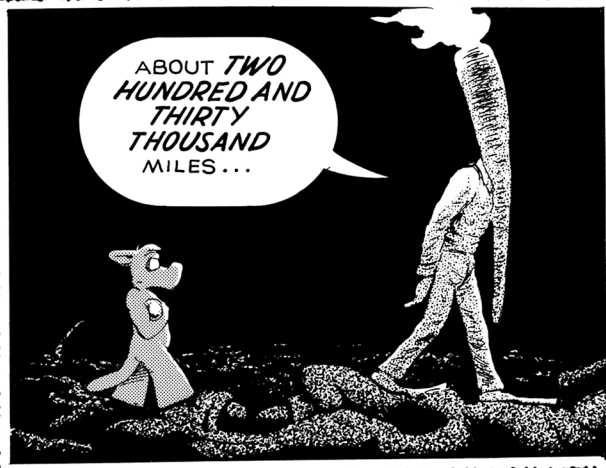




EARNEST NONSENSE

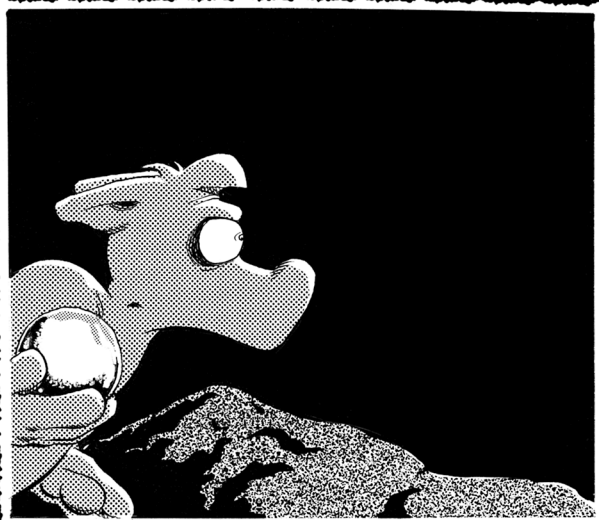
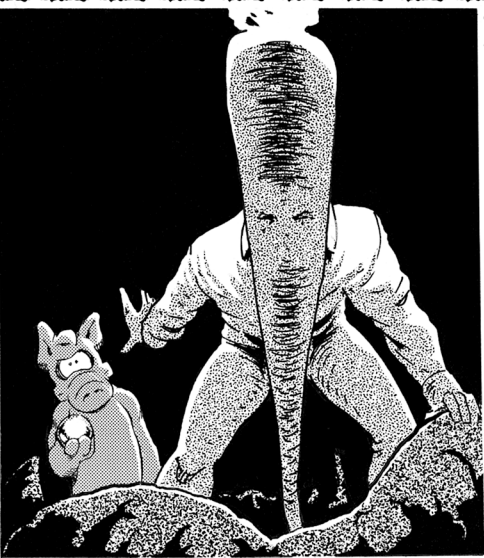
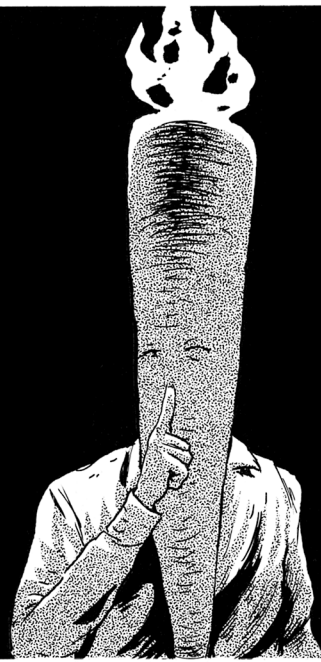


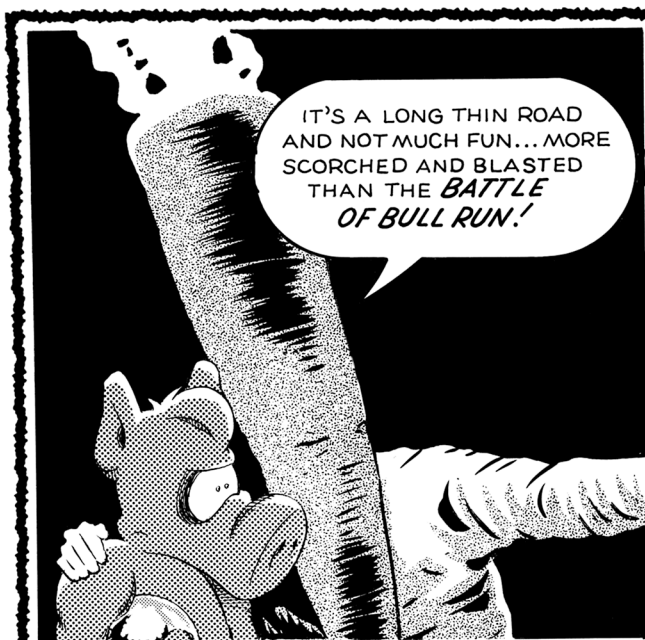




SHORT-CUT?!

WHAT
KIND
OF A
...





IT'S A LONG THIN ROAD
AND NOT MUCH FUN... MORE
SCORCHED AND BLASTED
THAN THE *BATTLE*
OF BULL RUN!

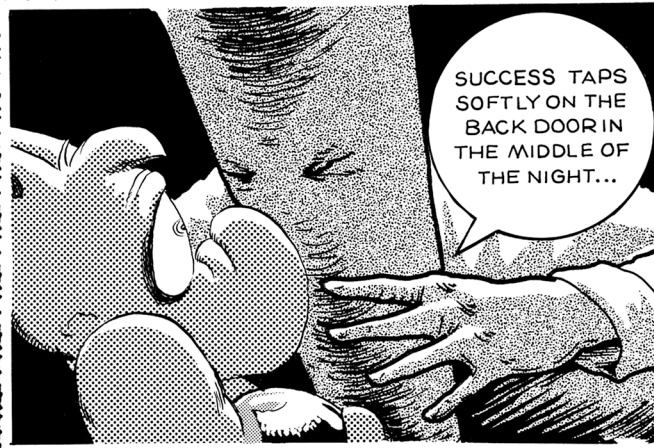


THE WORST STRETCH OF SHADE
UNDER THE SUN... UGLIER THAN THE
FEET OF *ATTILA THE HUN!*...

BUT WE'LL
JUST CALL IT
HIGHWAY
61!



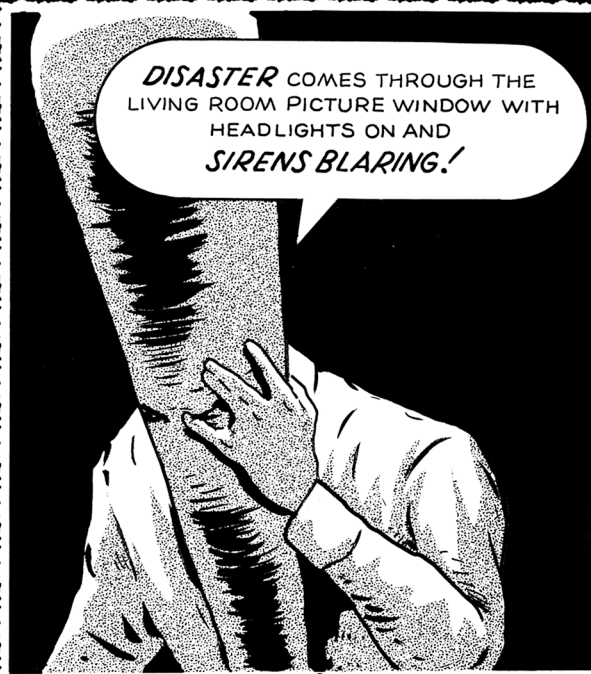
WAIT A MINUTE!
WHO ARE
YOU?



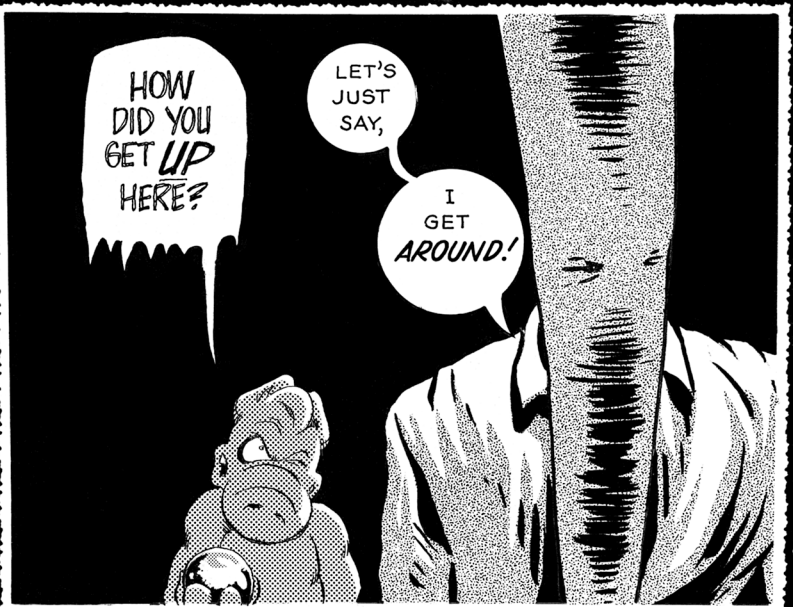
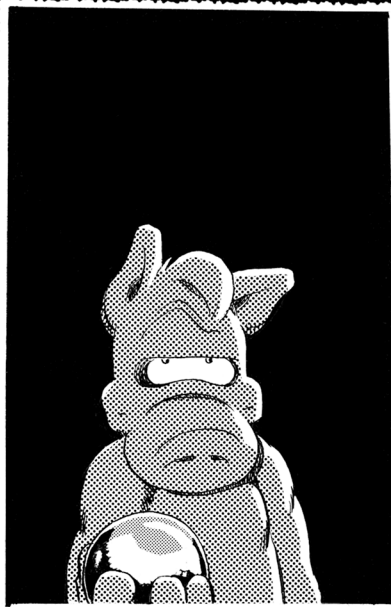
SUCCESS TAPS
SOFTLY ON THE
BACK DOOR IN
THE MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT...

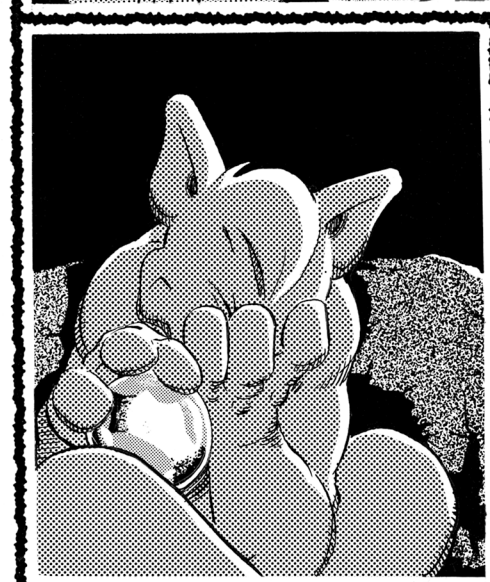
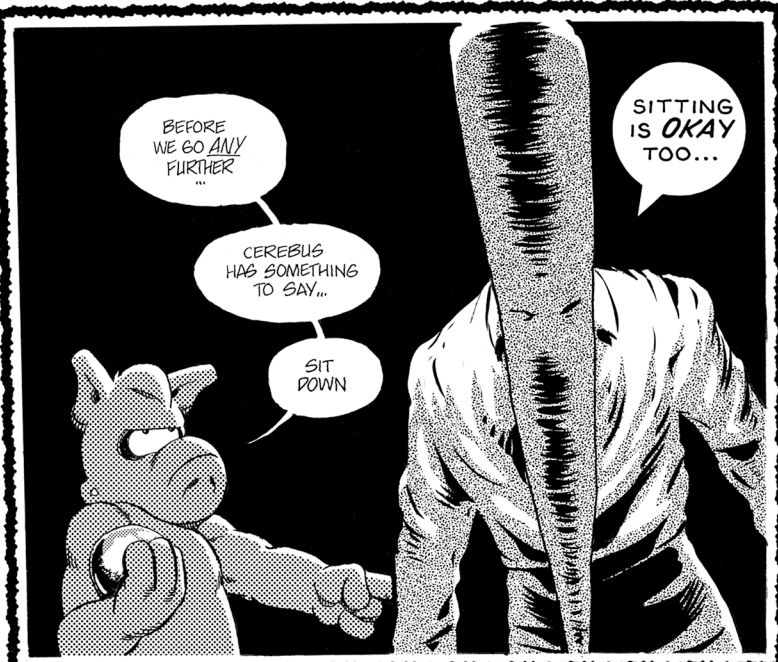


... *NEVER* RINGS
THE BELL ...



DISASTER COMES THROUGH THE
LIVING ROOM PICTURE WINDOW WITH
HEADLIGHTS ON AND
SIRENS BLARING!





AND CEREBUS CAN'T
SEE A SINGLE REASON
CEREBUS WOULD NEED
YOUR HELP...

SO...

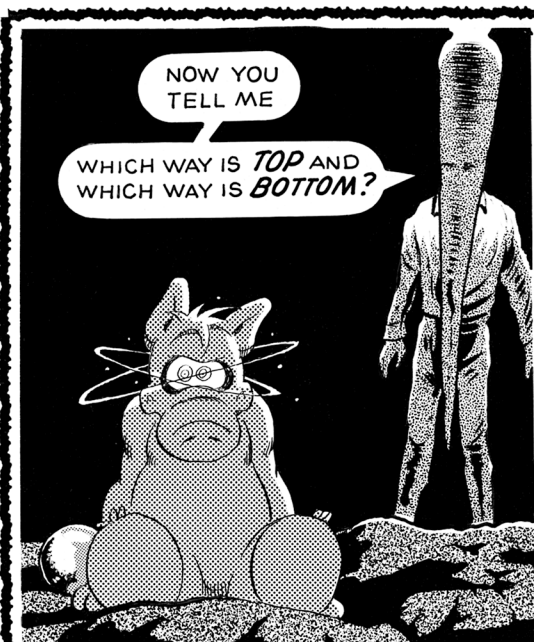
THIS REALLY IS
AN ART MUSEUM,
HUH?

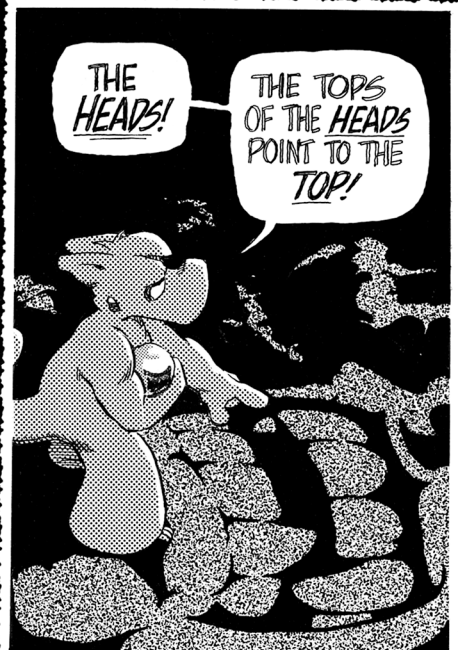
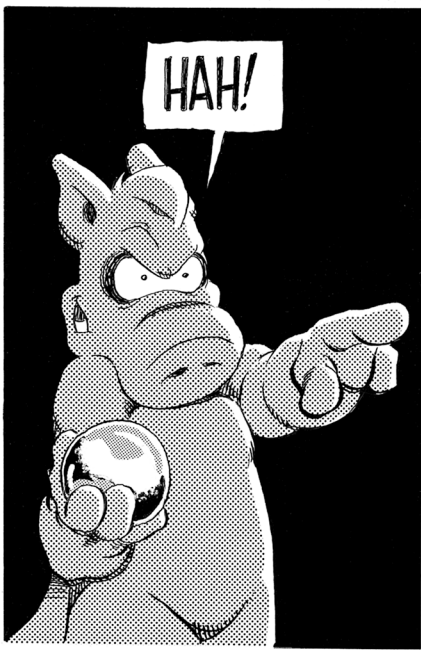
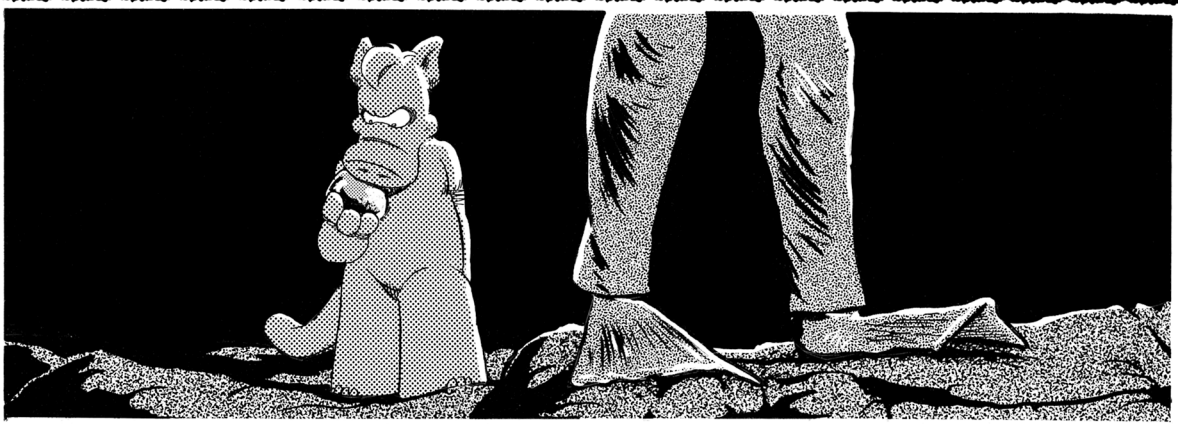
YOU ARE A
SUSPICIOUS
AND
CONFOUNDING
CREATURE!

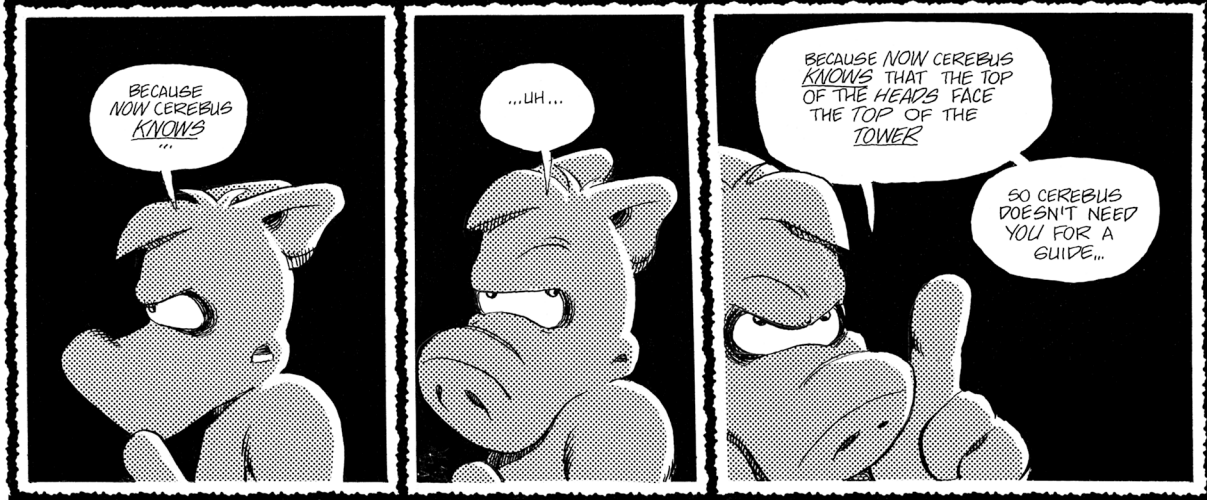
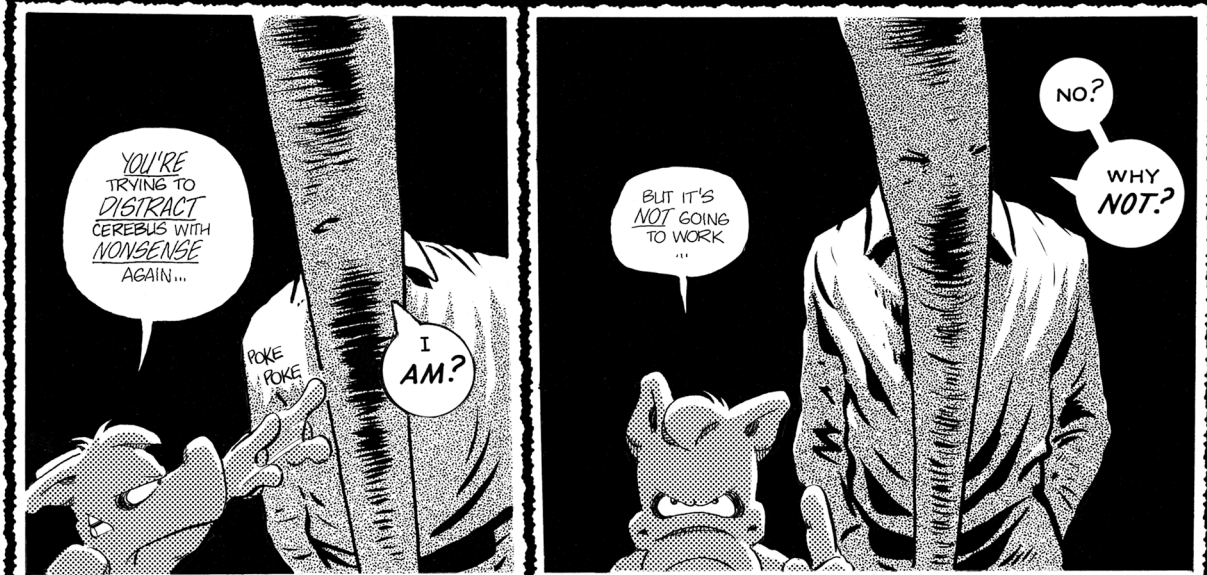
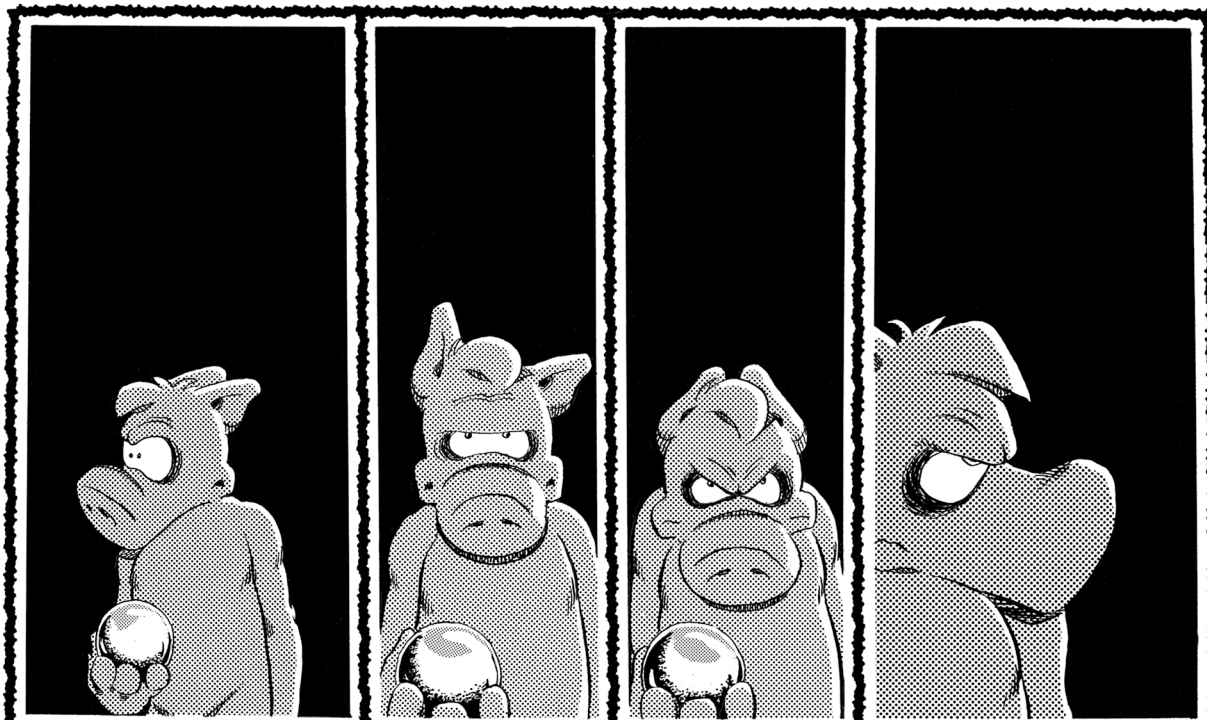
HEY!

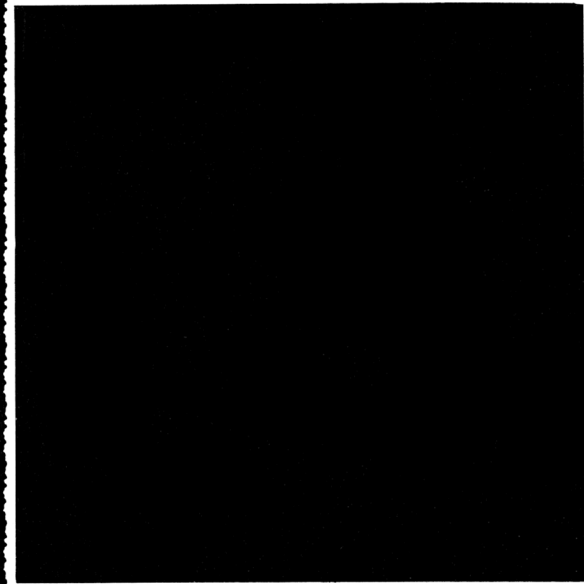
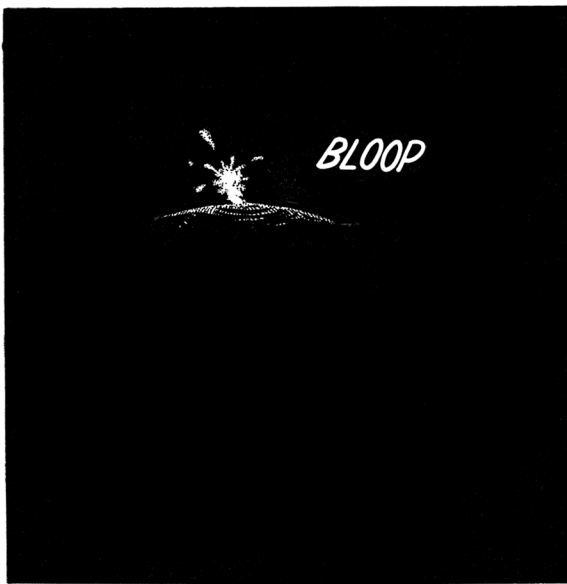
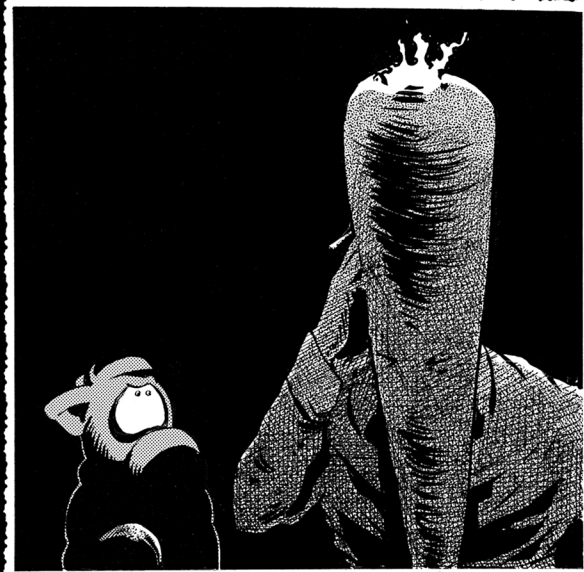
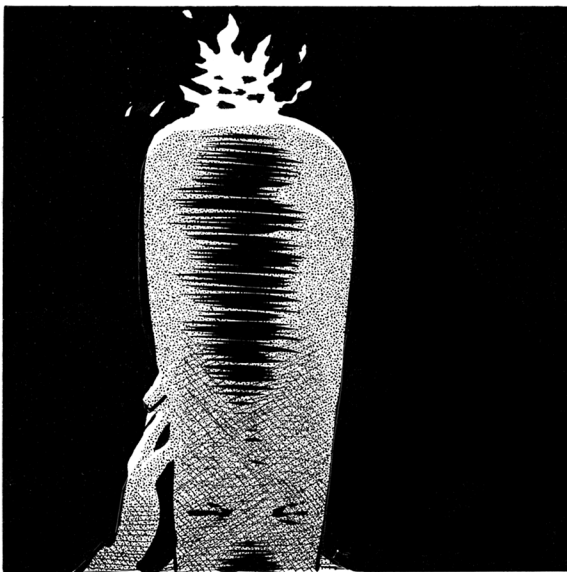
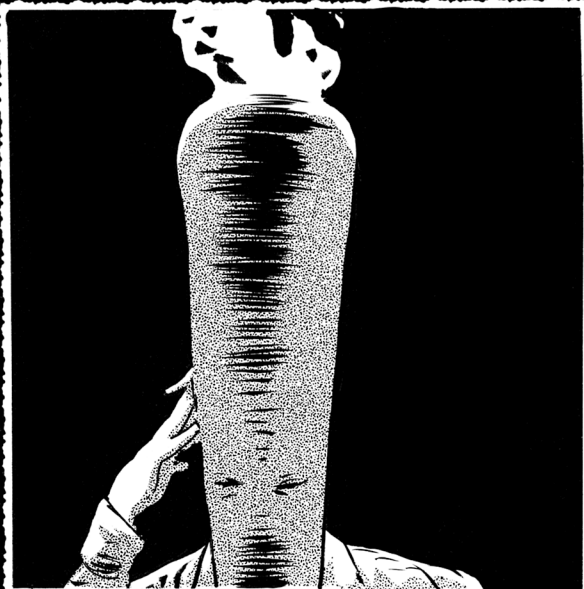
SPIN!

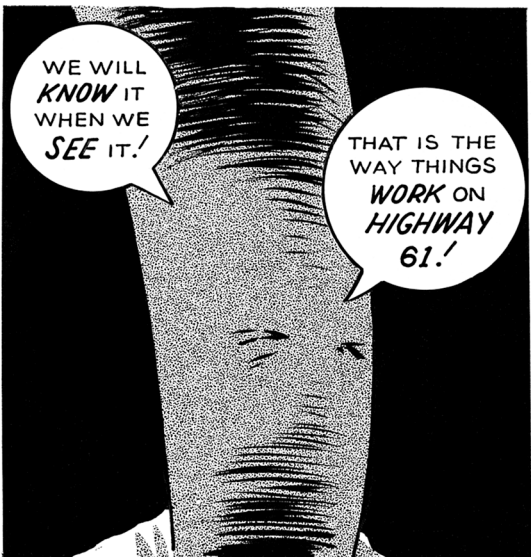
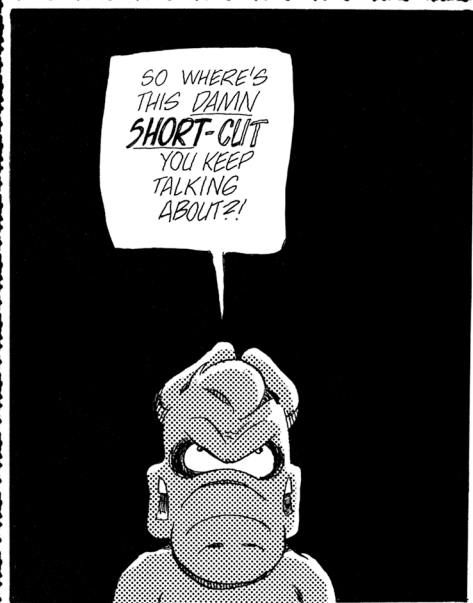
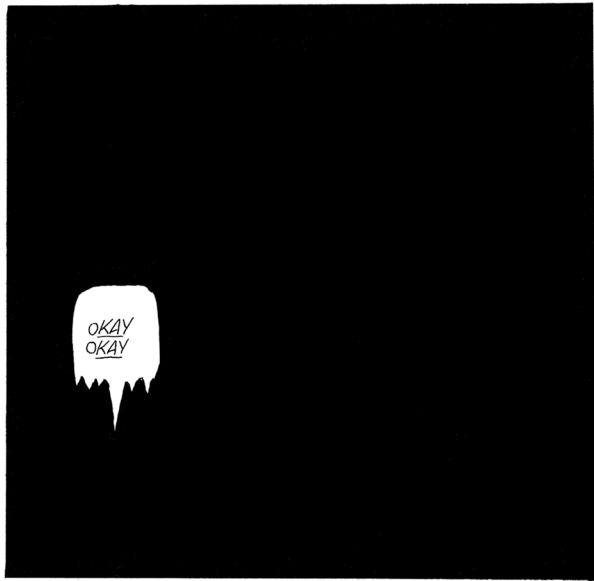
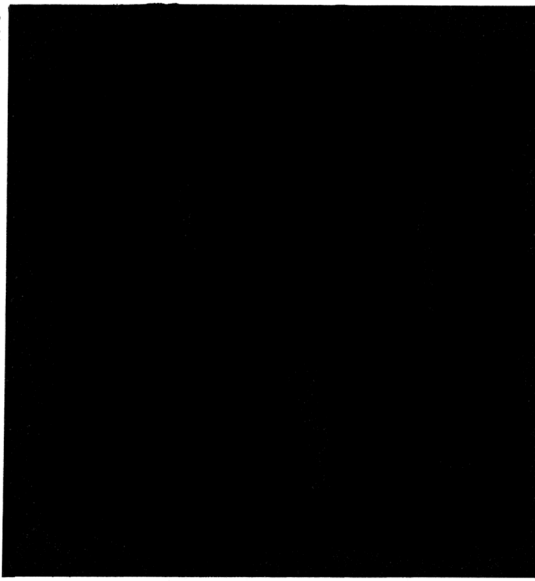
PLOP

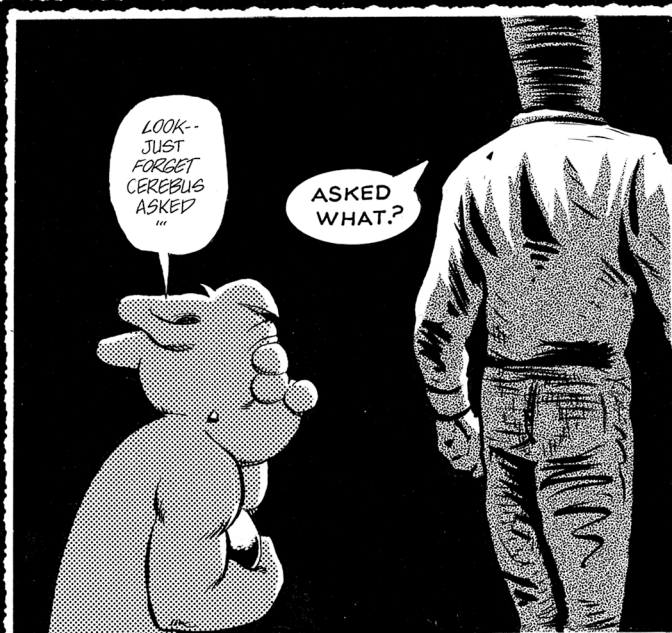


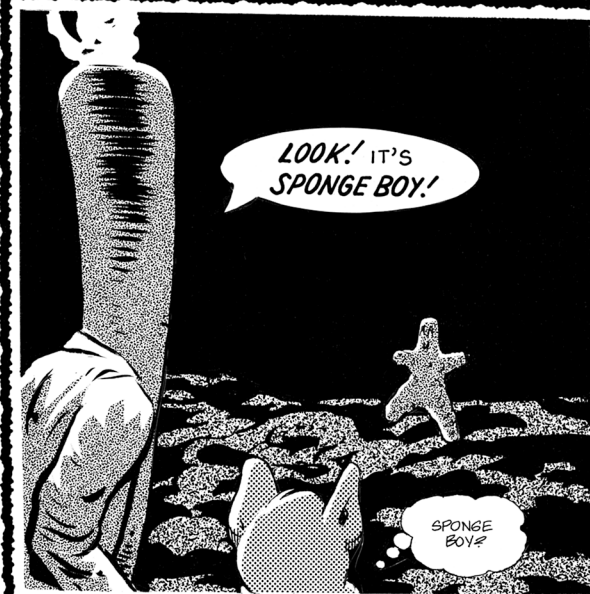















WHAT WERE
YOU SAYING?
ABOUT THE
SHORT-CUT?



ASIDE FROM THE
BANDIT MOONS, HOW
WAS YOUR BIRTHDAY?

IT WAS A MOST
PECULIAR AND
INCREDIBLE
ADVENTURE.




SOMETHING
ABOUT... *SIDE*
TUNNELS?

UT!

FEEL
THAT

OOO



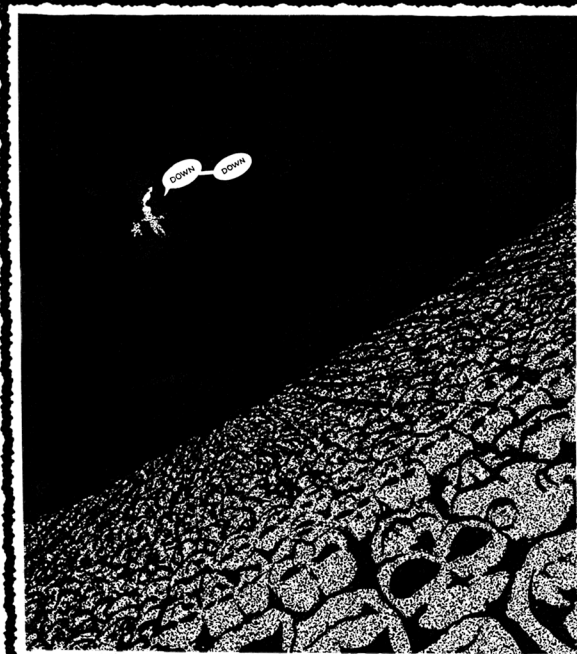
YOU MUST HOLD TIGHT
NOW... THE TOWER
IS ABOUT TO STOP
SPINNING.



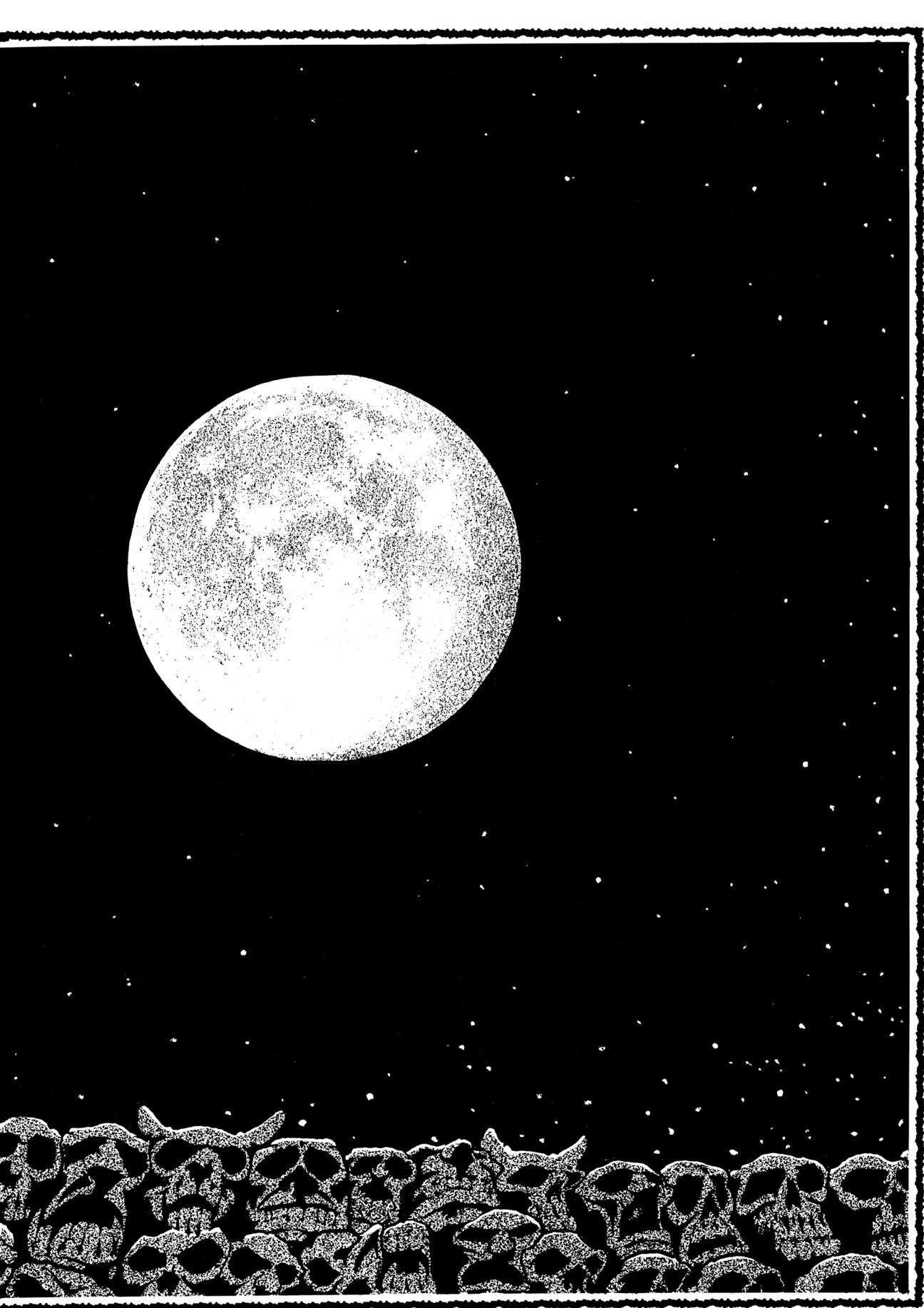
WHAT?
WHAT DO
YOU...?



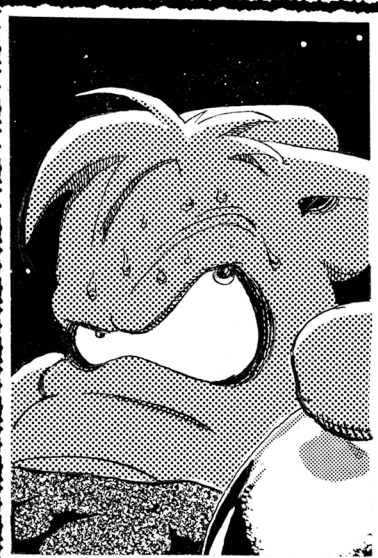
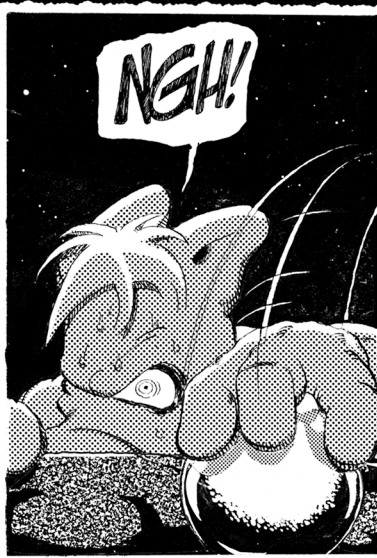
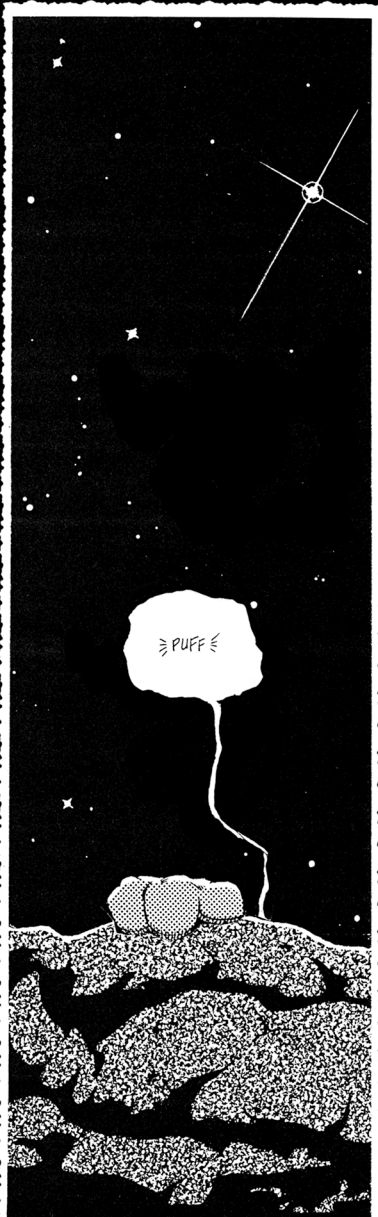
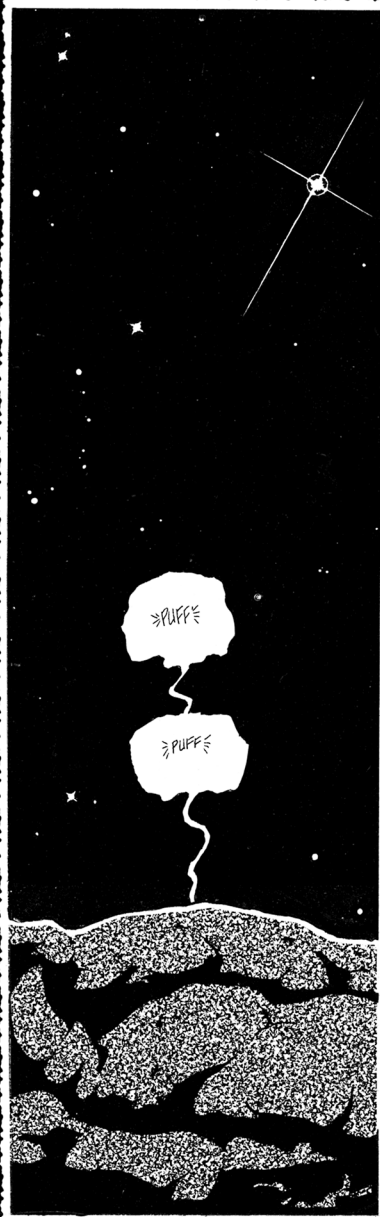
AAAK!



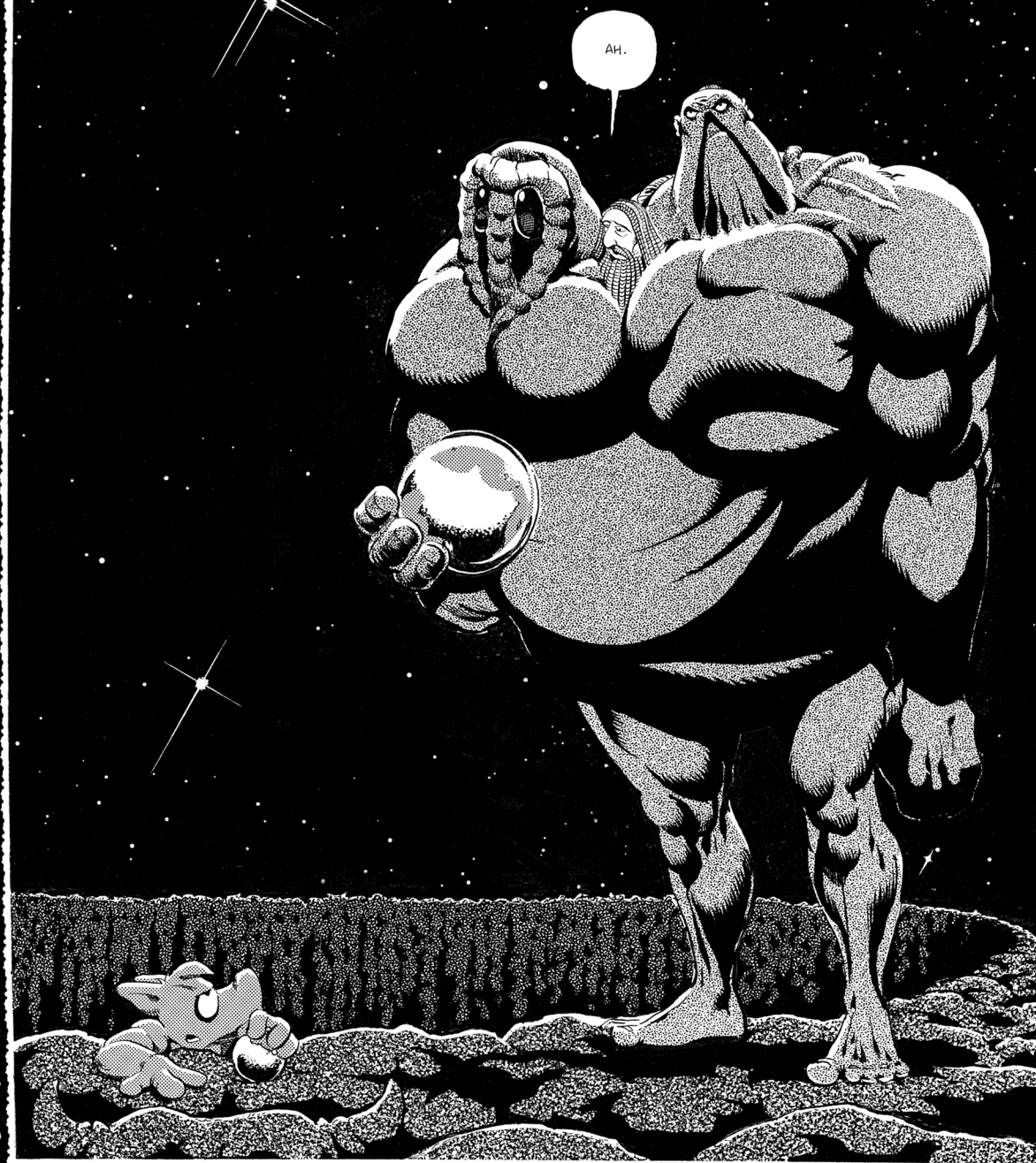








COUPLE CAPABLE





AND HERE YOU ARE ...



COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY I CAN ASSURE YOU.



NOW BE A GOOD CHAP ...



AND LEAD TO YOUR DEATH, MM...?

AND WHAT?



NOW NOW NOW

ONLY ROOM FOR ONE UP HERE.

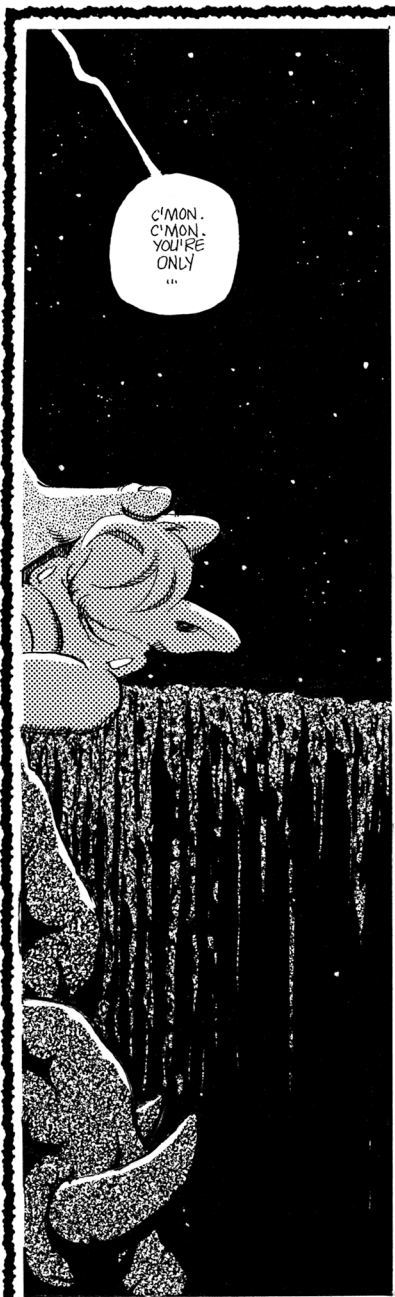
RIGHT?

RIGHT.

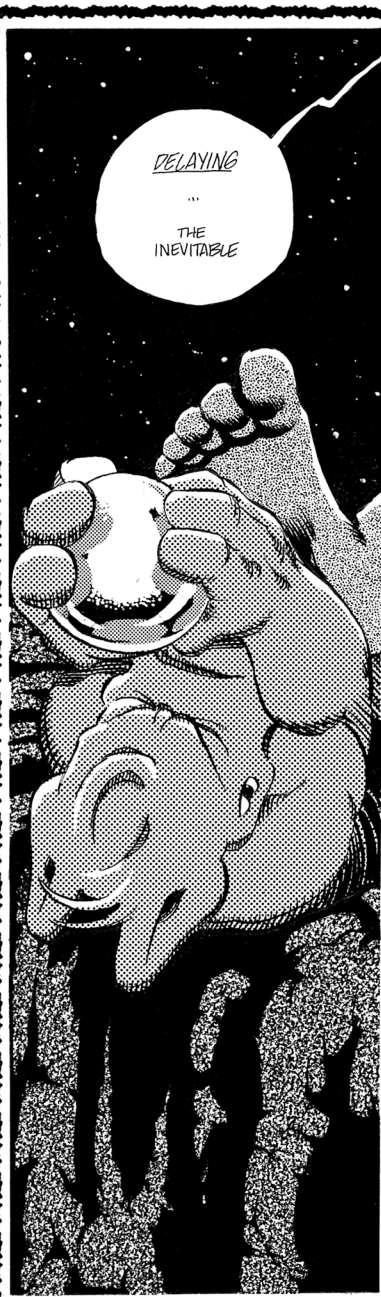


OVER Y'GO...

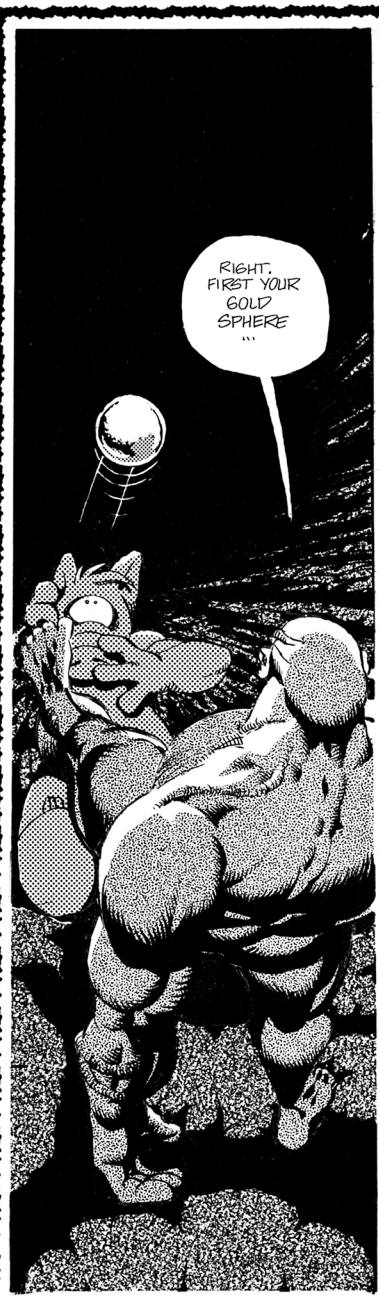
HEY!



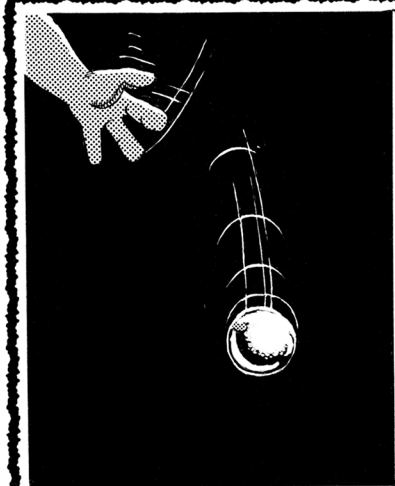
C'MON.
C'MON.
YOU'RE
ONLY
...



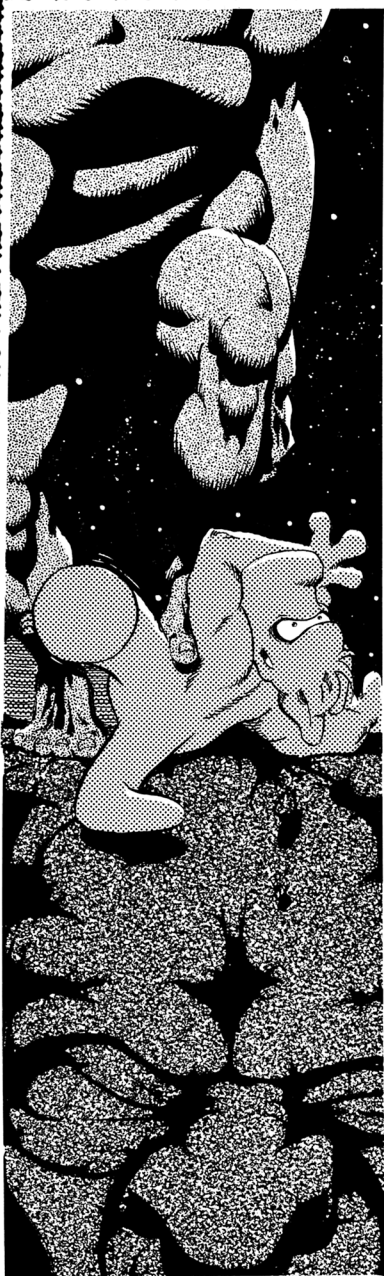
DELAYING
...
THE
INEVITABLE



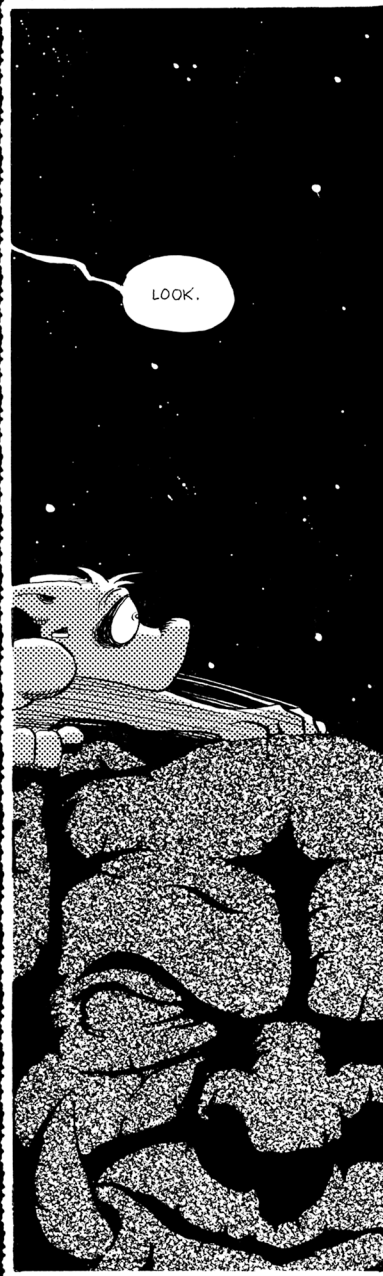
RIGHT.
FIRST YOUR
GOLD
SPHERE
...



NOW...



OH, FOR
THE LOVE
OF...



LOOK.



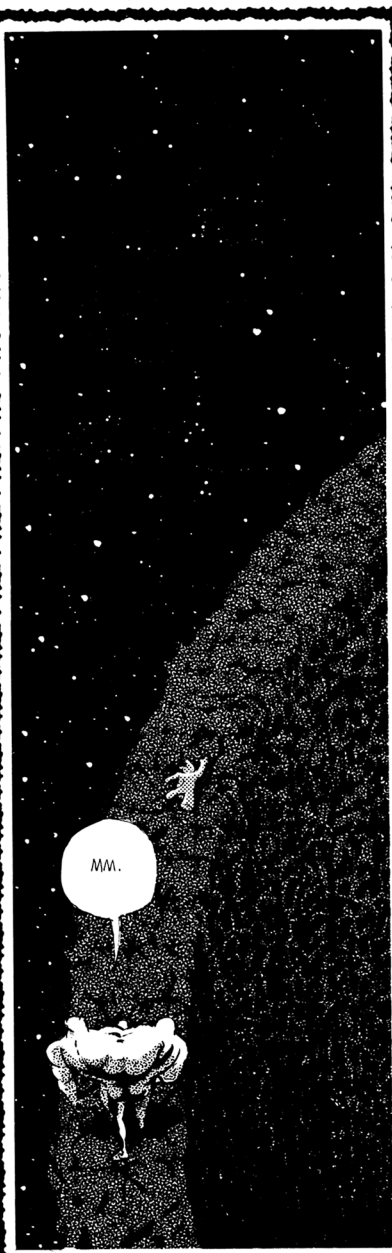
IT'S
OVER...



YOU HAVEN'T
GOT A GOLD
SPHERE



YOU HAVEN'T
GOT ANYTHING.





LOOK AROUND
YOU... THE
CIRCUMFERENCE
OF THE TOWER
IS DIMINISHING
1084



YOU
KNOW.

GETTING
SMALLER?



THE PRECISE
RATE IS AROUND
A FOOT AND A
HALF PER
SECOND...

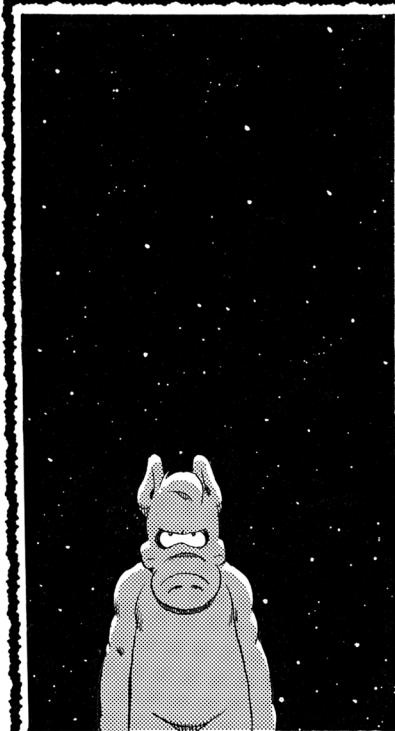
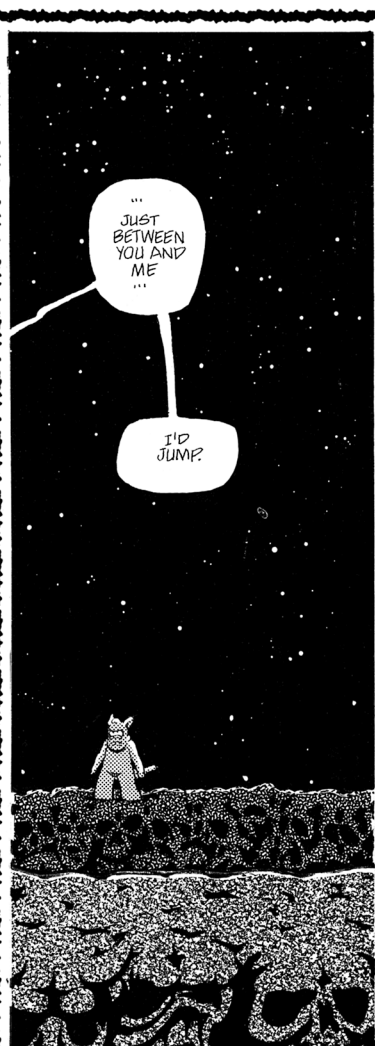
YOU MAY
BE OVER THERE
NOW...



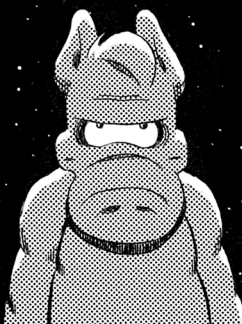
BUT IN
A FEW
MINUTES
1085



ONE
WAY OR
ANOTHER
1086



WHAT IF ASTORIA
IS RIGHT? HIM?
WHAT IF THE
DEITY IS A
FEMALE...?



I MEAN-- SHE'S APT
TO TAKE A SOMEWHAT
DIM VIEW OF YOU
THROWING A BABY
OFF A ROOF,
DON'T YOU
THINK?



THE
FRONT
STEPS



EXCUSE
ME?



CEREBUS
THREW THE
BABY OFF THE
FRONT STEPS.

CEREBUS
KICKED THE
CRIPPLE OFF
THE ROOF.





SO MUCH FOR
ATTEMPTING TO
INVOLVE YOU
INTELLECTUALLY
IN THE ISSUE
AT HAND



PERHAPS A
DEMONSTRATION
IS IN
ORDER...



“AHEM”

HEM



O, BOUNTIFUL
TERIM, MOTHER
OF ALL THAT
LIVES, BEHOLD!



I BRING YOU
A SPHERE OF
PUREST
GOLD!



AND
um...

ON AND ON
IN THAT
VEIN.



NOW, IF IT
TURNS OUT
TO BE A
MALE
DEITY...



I
SWITCH
HANDS...



ADOPT A
SLIGHTLY
DIFFERENT
POSTURE

AND...



O, MIGHTY
TARIM, WHOSE
WRATH ALL
MEN FEAR

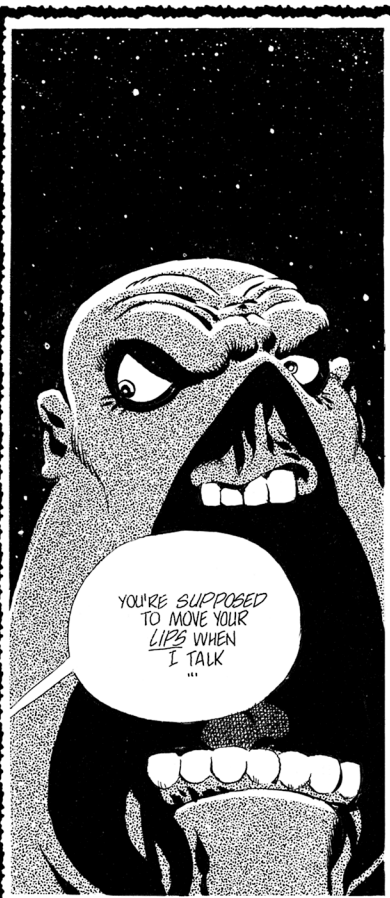


I BRING
BEFORE
YOU A--



FRED.

FRED!



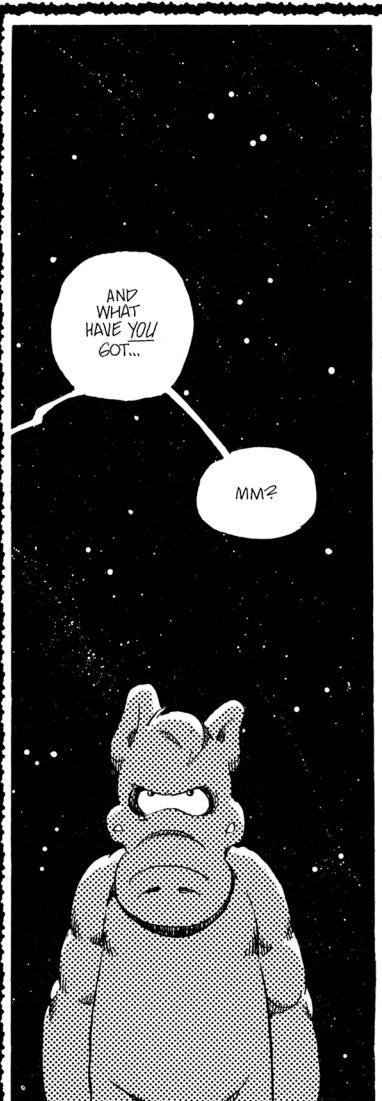


HE'S COMING
ALONG NICELY
...



SO YOU SEE,
I'VE GOT A
FREEP. I'VE
GOT AN
ETHEL.

I'VE GOT
A SPHERE
OF PUREST
GOLD...



AND
WHAT
HAVE YOU
GOT...

MM?



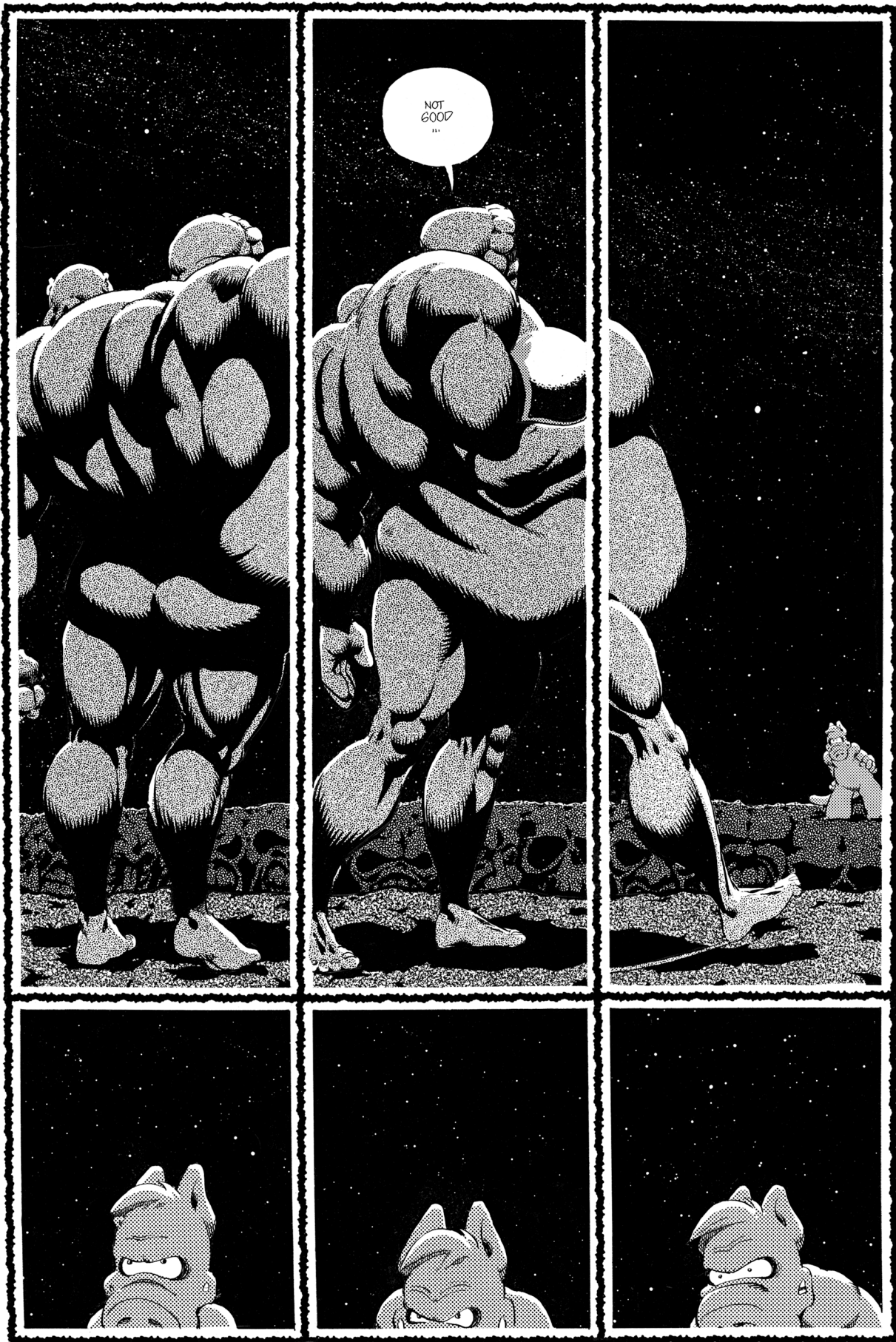
YOUR ONLY REAL HOPE
IS THAT THE DEITY
TURNS OUT TO BE A
SHORT, GREY, MEAN-
SPIRITED MISSHAPEN
MISANTHROPE WITH
POINTED EARS, A
SNOUT AND A
TAIL...

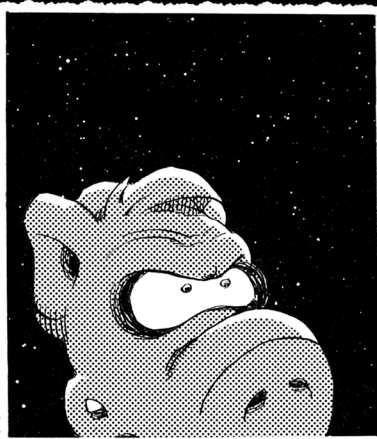


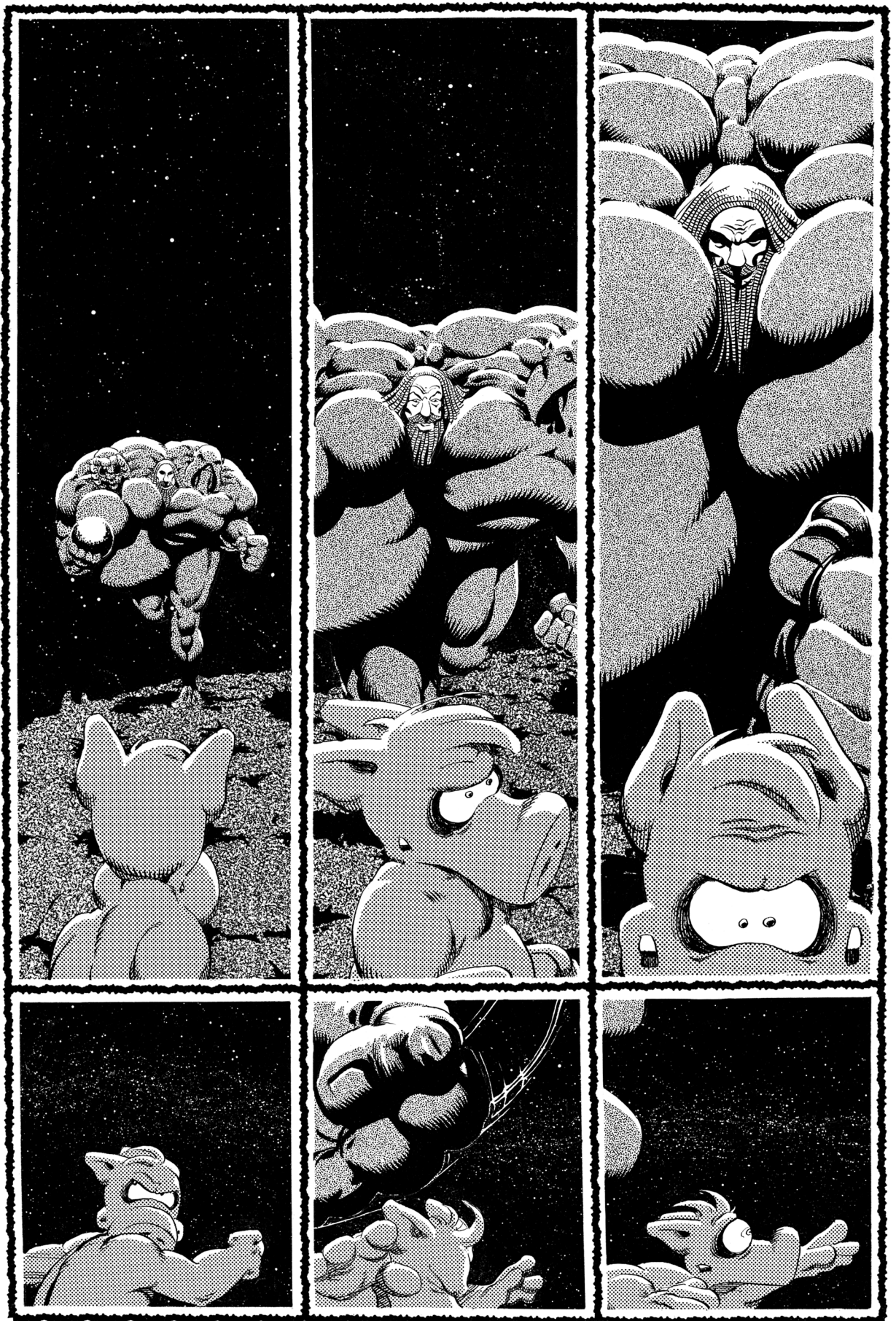
LET'S
FACE
IT.

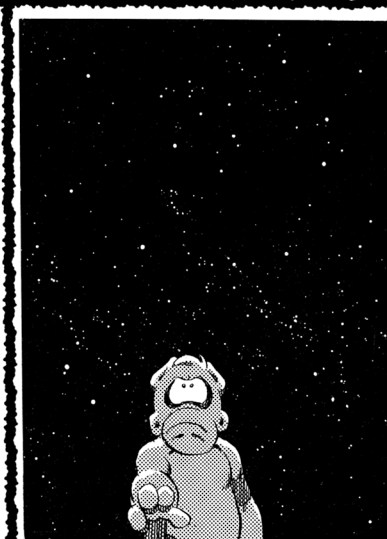


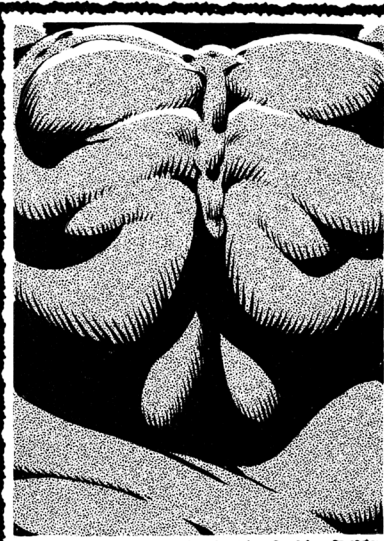
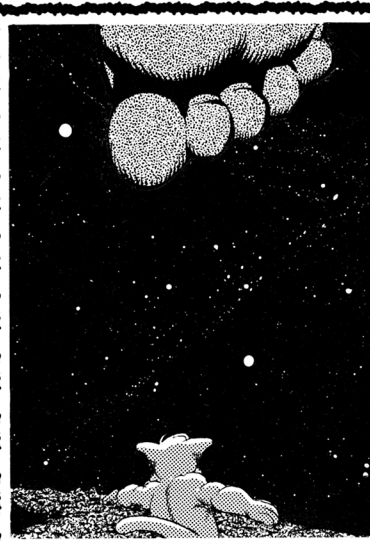
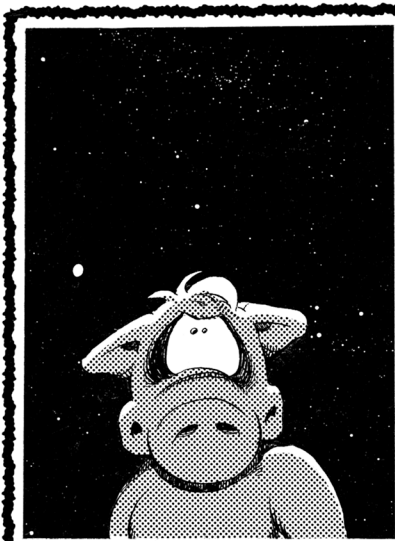
THE ODDS
ARE NOT
GOOD.











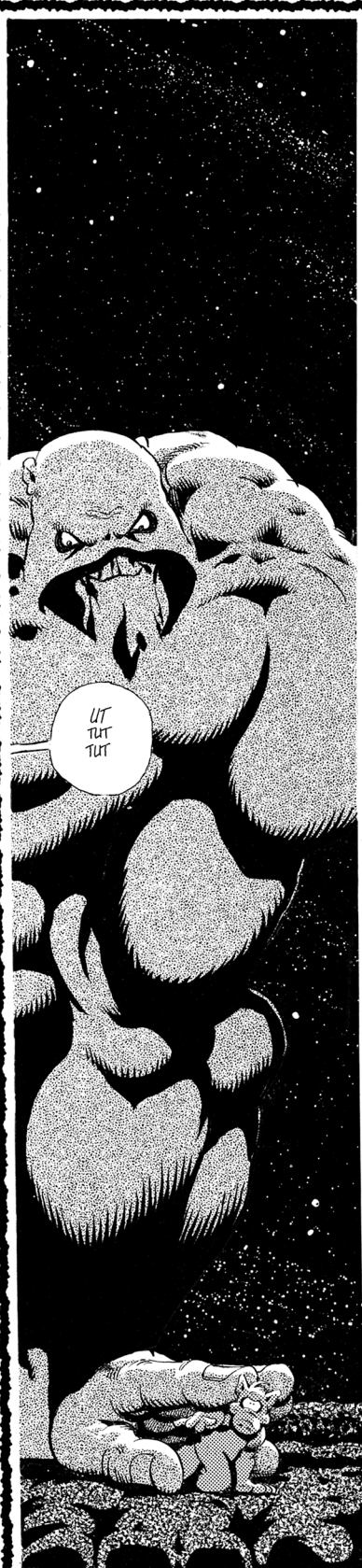


NOW
THEN
...



UT!
...



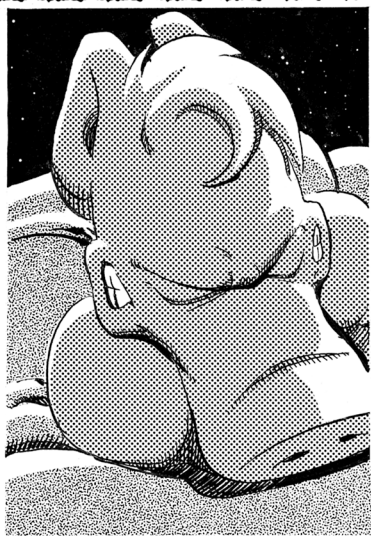
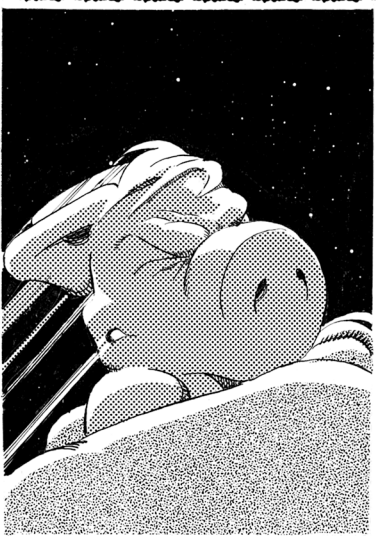


NEXT: MORE FUN WITH FRED, ETHEL AND THE LITTLE FELLOW WITH THE HAIR

GREATNESS GROWNS FLIES

AS YOU MAY HAVE
NOTICED I HAVE,
JUST NOW, GROWN
TO NEARLY TWO-THIRDS
OF MY ULTIMATE GOD-LIKE
SIZE...





"HOW SO?"
YOU MIGHT WELL ASK.
TO UNDERSTAND THAT
YOU MUST FIRST UNDER-
STAND THAT THE PRIMARY
LAW GOVERNING ALL
REALITIES IS THE LAW
OF CONSEQUENCE. IT
IS THE GREAT LEVELLER
OF ALL BEINGS AND
FORMS OF LIFE FROM
MOUSE TO...

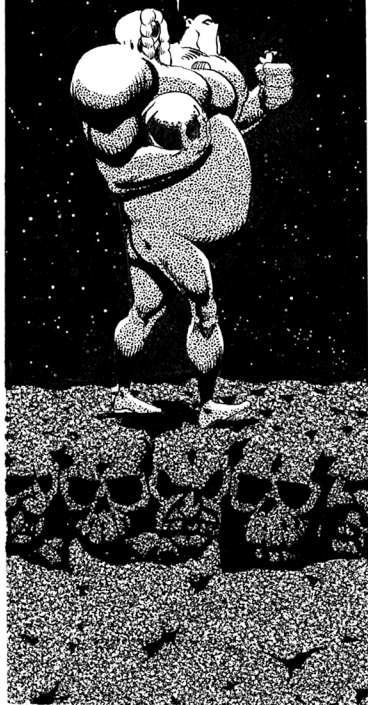
...MESSIAH.

ARE YOU
WITH ME
SO FAR?

SPLendid.

NOW AS A MESSIAH
(A GOD-MANIFESTATION),
REPERCUSSION
(CONSEQUENCE)
BECOMES A
TRICKY SORT OF
BUSINESS
...

REPRESENTING
(AS I DO) THE
ASPIRATIONS, THE
HOPES AND ALL
THAT IS GOOD IN
ALL MANKIND,
MY LIFE TAKES
ON A MEANING
GREATER THAN,
WELL, GREATNESS
...



MY LIFE BECOMES,
FOR WANT OF A
BETTER DESCRIPTION,
AN ULTIMATE ART
FORM. EACH MOVE
A SACRED TEXT--
EACH COMMENT
A BOOK OF GREAT
TEACHING AND
WISDOM.



AN
ULTIMATE ART FORM
REPRESENTING AN
HARMONIOUS BALANCE
BETWEEN MALE
AND FEMALE, MAN
AND GOD, CREATOR
AND CREATION...

RENDERED WITH
PAINTERLY SKILL,
STROKE BY PAIN-
TAKING STROKE,
LEADING, ULTIMATELY,
TO THIS THRESHOLD
OF MY DESTINY

THE MEETING
OF MESSIAH
AND DEITY...



WHICH, ODDLY
ENOUGH, BRINGS
US TO YOU...

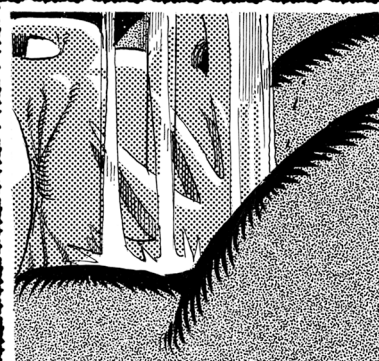
A STRAY BIT OF
FLUFF BLOWN ON
WHO-KNOWS-WHAT
CAPRICIOUS BREEZE
OF FATE--
LODGED...

...ALBEIT
TEMPORARILY
...

...IN THE DAMP
PIGMENT OF THIS
EPOCH-MAKING
MOMENT...



JUST
ONE OF THOSE
SYNCHRONISTIC
ANOMALIES, IN
THE FACE OF
WHICH EVEN
WE OMNISCIENTS
CAN MERELY
SHRUG
...



THE PROBLEM REDUCES
ITSELF TO ONE OF
DISPOSAL... RETURNING
US (AS IT DOES) TO
OUR OLD FRIEND
CONSEQUENCE...

I GRANT THAT YOU
DON'T LOOK LIKE
MUCH OF ANYTHING
(ASIDE FROM THE...
SELF-EVIDENT...
DEFORMITIES).

BUT WHO COULD SAY
(OF A CERTAINTY) THAT
YOUR DEMISE MIGHT
NOT TRIGGER... SAY
... A SERIES OF
REPERCUSSIONS

FRED!

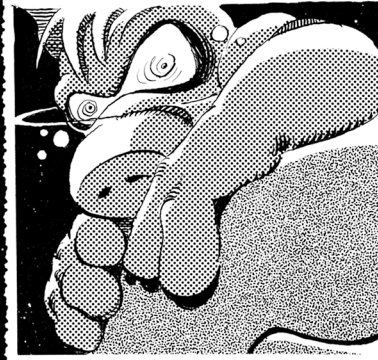
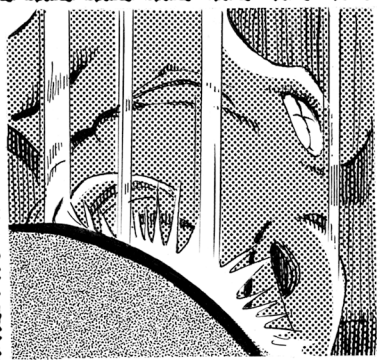
AND WHO COULD
SAY THAT, AS THE
INSTRUMENT
OF YOUR DESTRUCTION
...

(EVOLVED,
SHALL WE SAY
MORE FULLY
AS I AM)

...
THAT IT IS NOT
ALTOGETHER
UNLIKELY THAT
I MIGHT SUFFER
EVEN MORE
EXTREME
FORMS OF
CONSEQUENCE
...

AS A
CONSEQUENCE
...

...UH...





SIMPLER...

I KNOW.
I'M TRYING

JUST A
MOMENT.

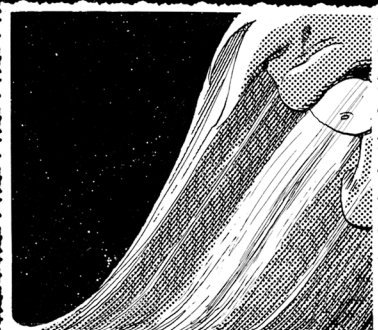


I
KNOW
"

WE'LL
GIVE
MAKE-
BELIEVE
A TRY



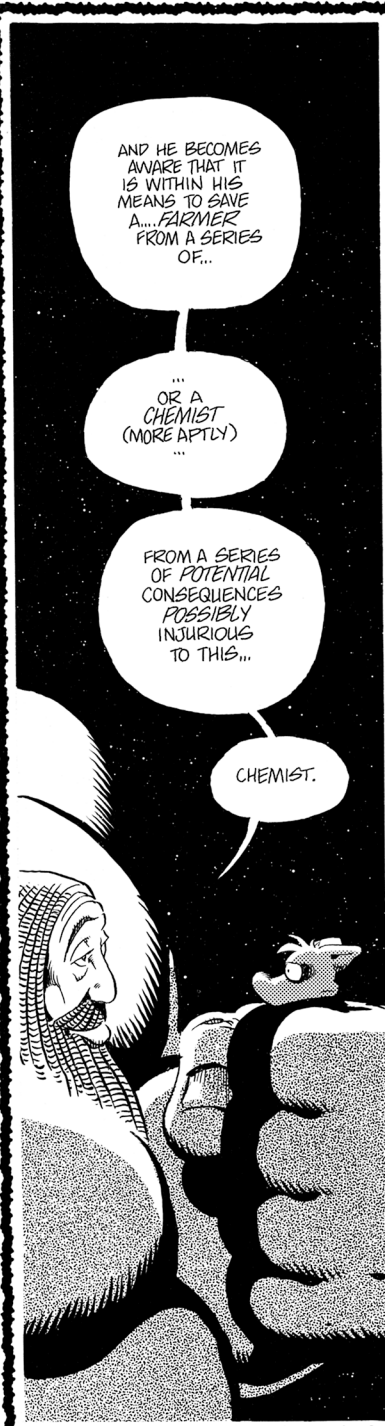
MAKE BELIEVE
UM.... THAT YOU'RE A
COMMON HOUSEFLY
WHO (THROUGH SOME
UNSPECIFIED MEANS)
SUDDENLY FINDS
HIMSELF IN
POSSESSION OF
COGNITIVE
ABILITIES...





FINDS
HIMSELF
CAPABLE OF
THOUGHT

OH.

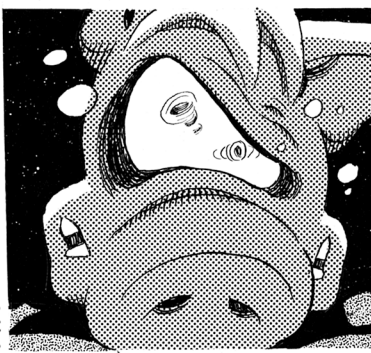
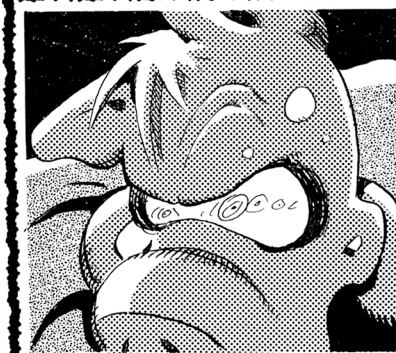


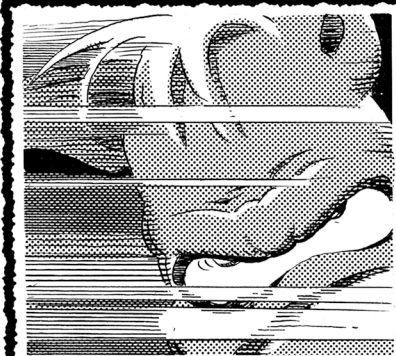
AND HE BECOMES
AWARE THAT IT
IS WITHIN HIS
MEANS TO SAVE
A... FARMER
FROM A SERIES
OF...

...
OR A
CHEMIST
(MORE APTLY)
...

FROM A SERIES
OF POTENTIAL
CONSEQUENCES
POSSIBLY
INJURIOUS
TO THIS...

CHEMIST.



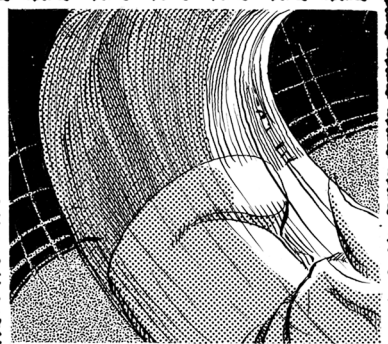
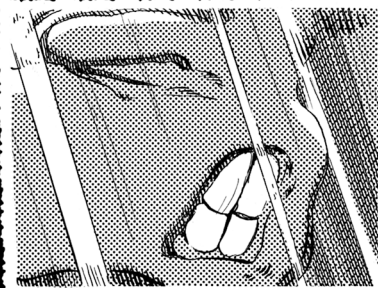
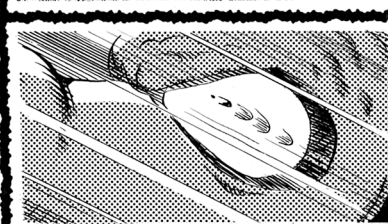




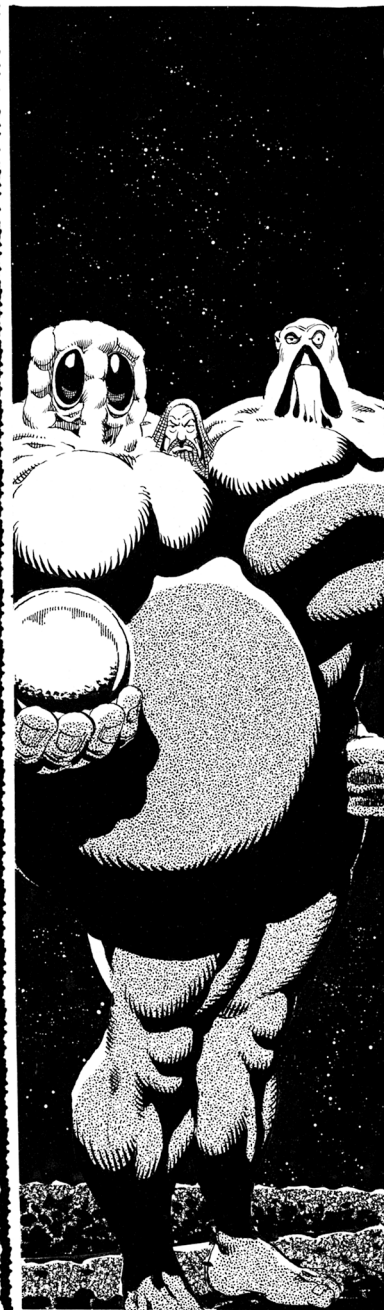
JUST
THINK
ABOUT IT
...

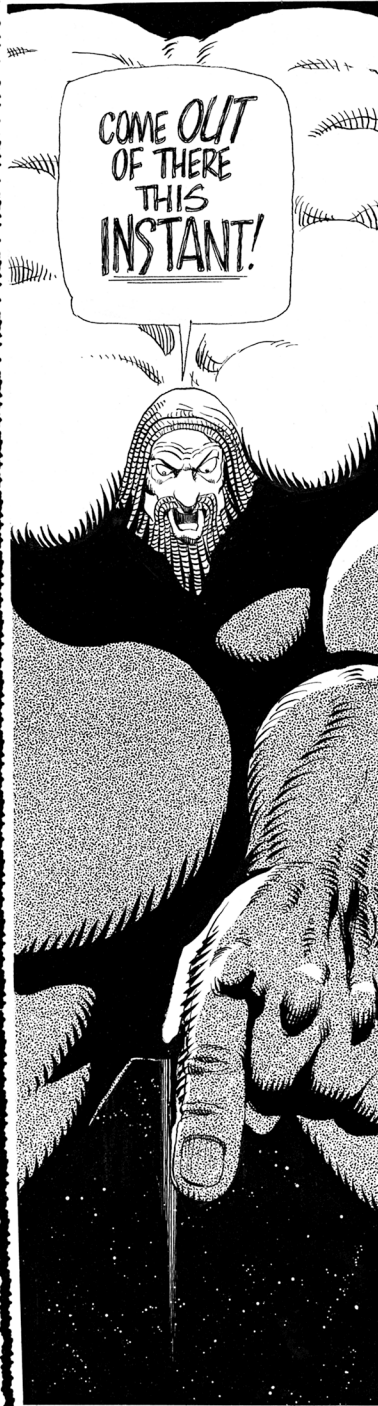
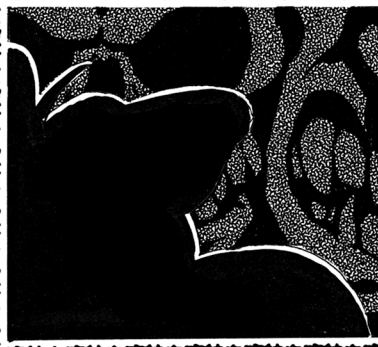


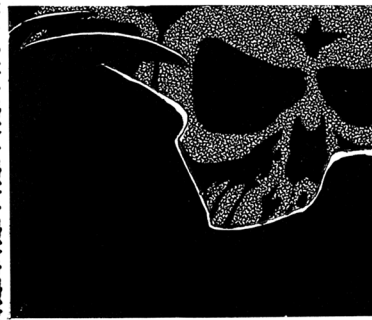
AND
WHILE YOU'RE
THINKING ABOUT
IT, I'LL JUST
SET YOU DOWN
HERE RIGHT NEXT
TO THE EDGE
...











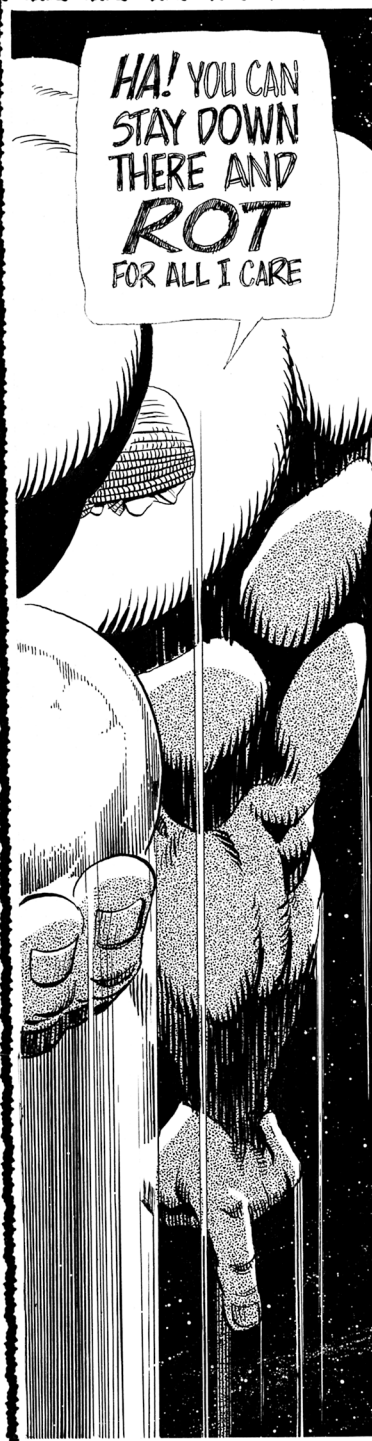
YOU KNOW, THIS
IS **EXACTLY**
THE SORT OF
THING WHICH
COMPELS
EVOLUTION TO
LIMP ALONG
ON THE BASIS
OF **NATURAL**
SELECTION...!

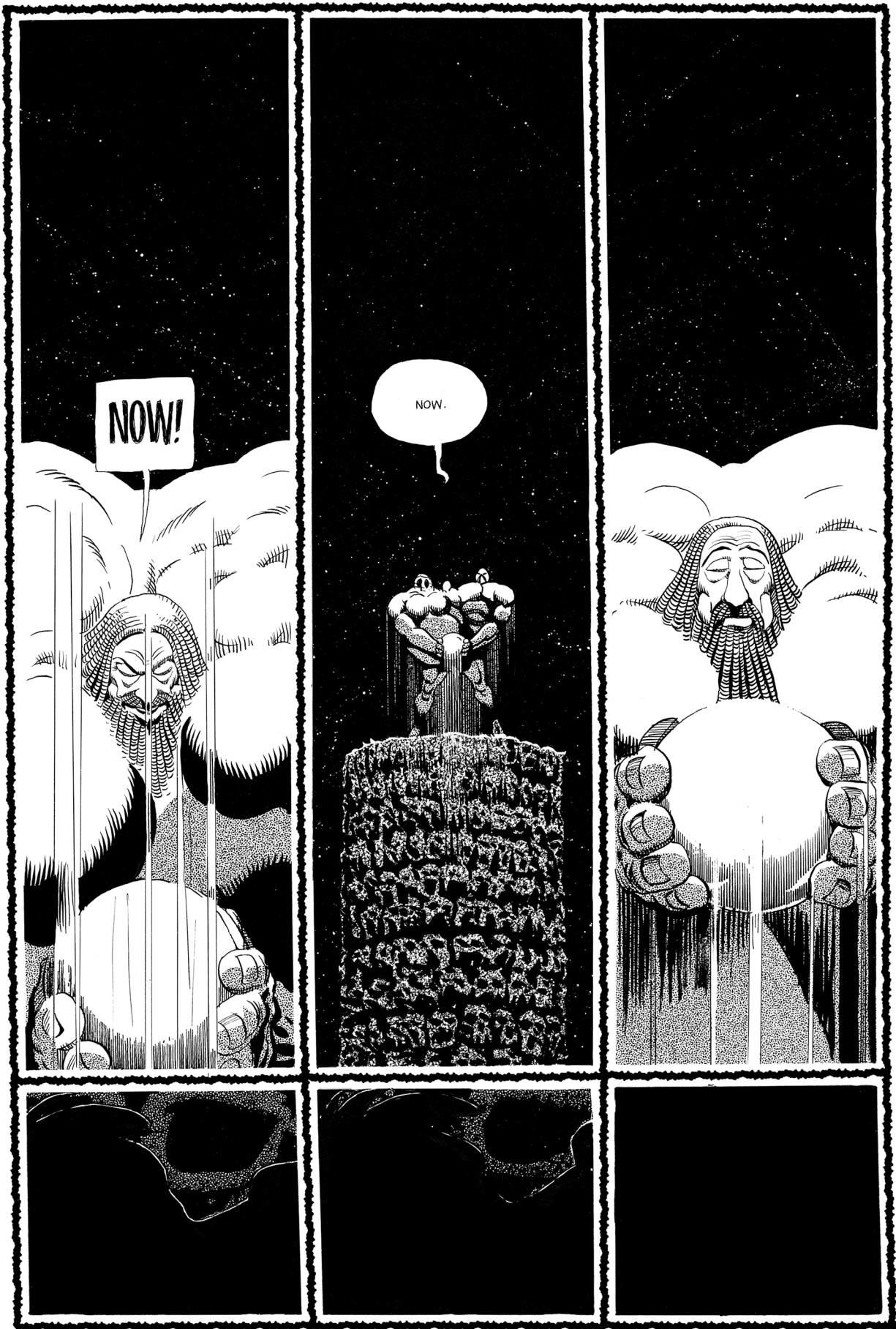


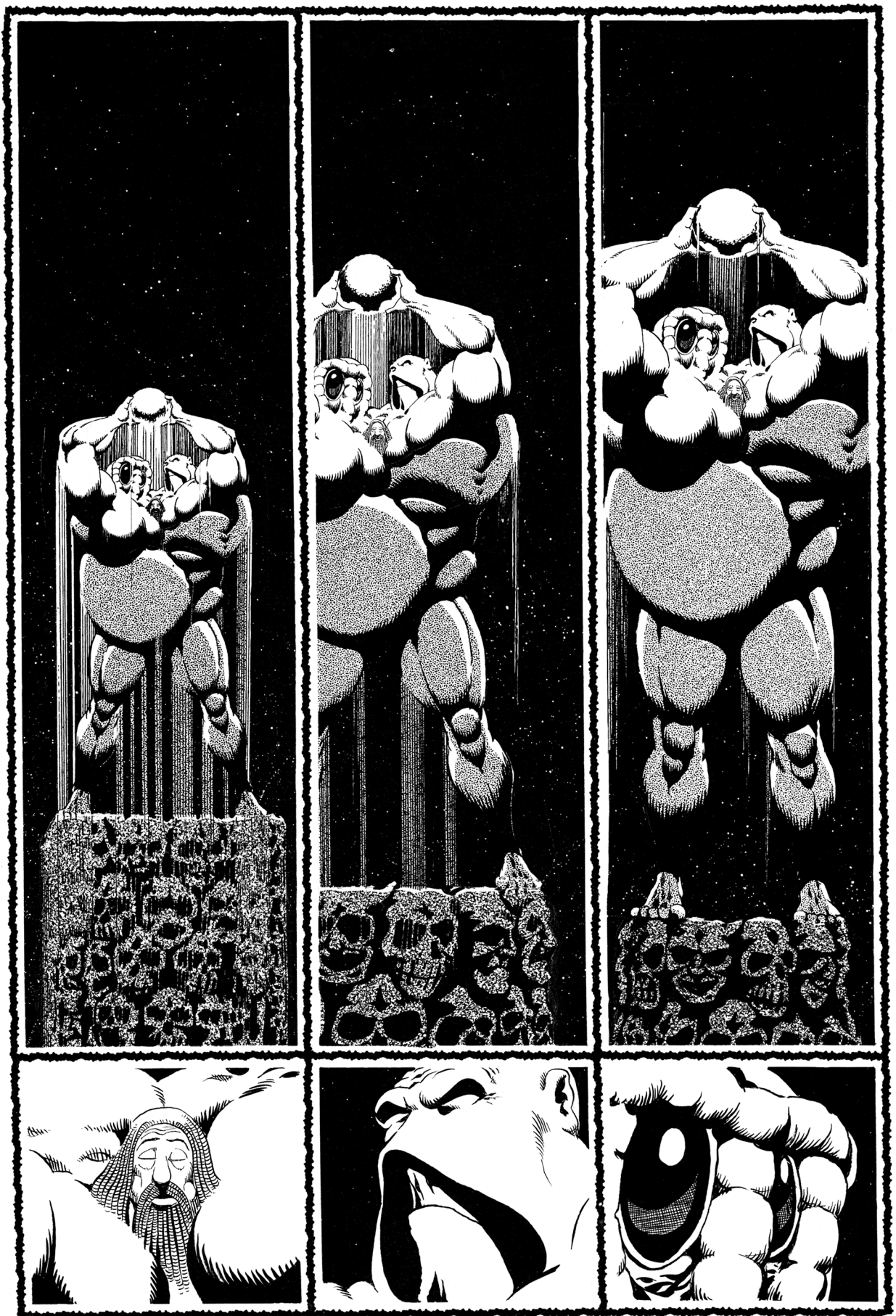
URR
RUR..

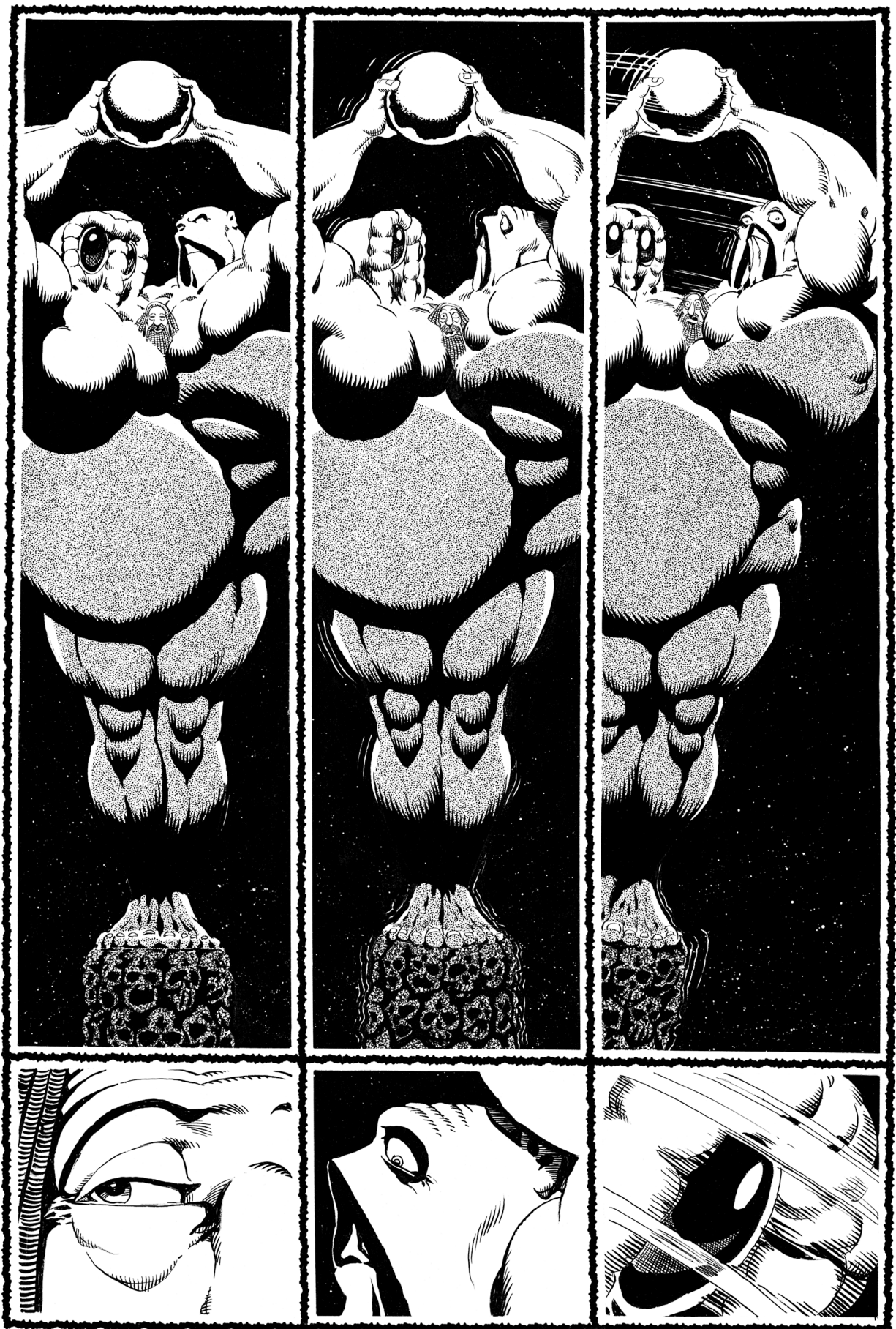


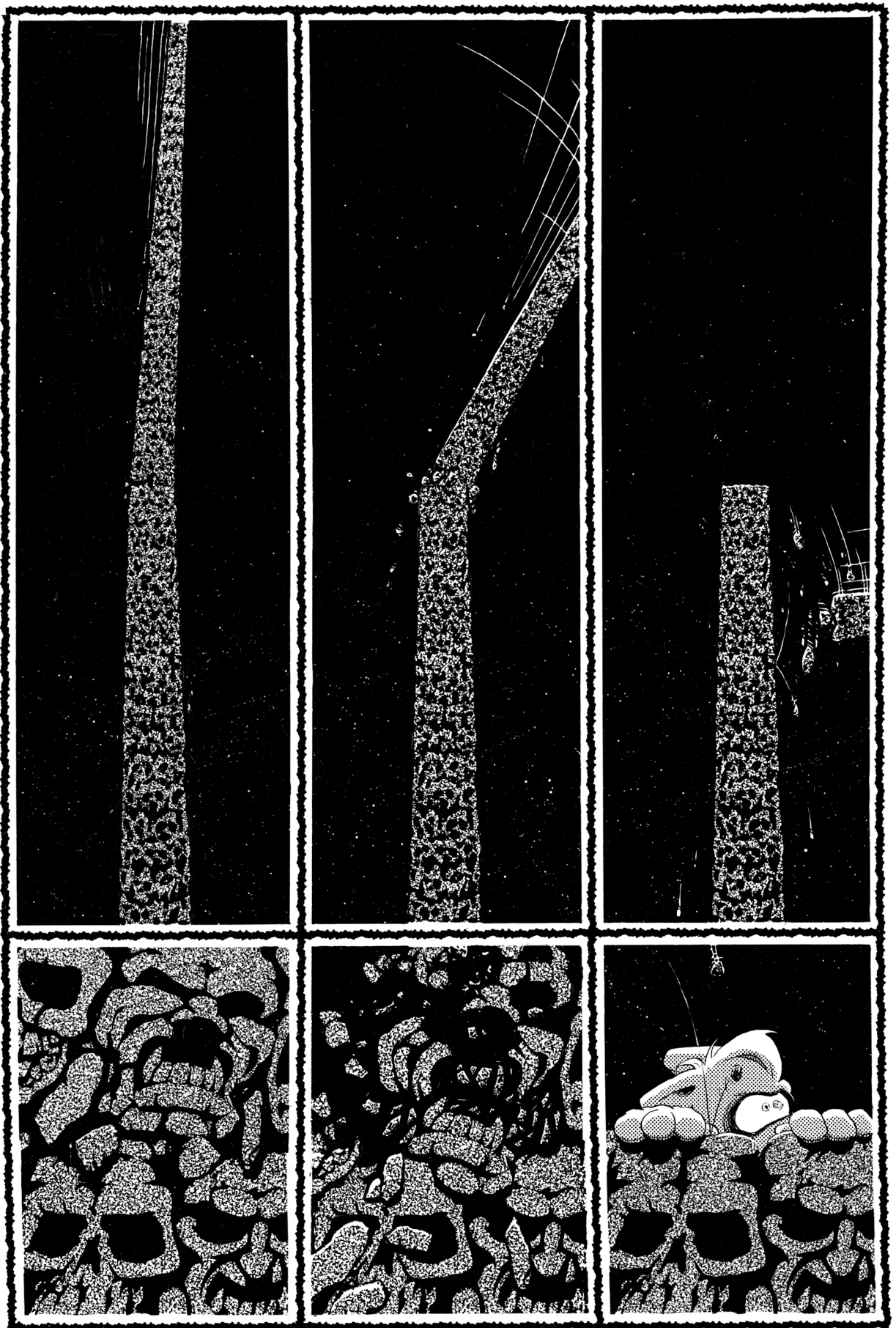
HA! YOU CAN
STAY DOWN
THERE AND
ROT
FOR ALL I CARE

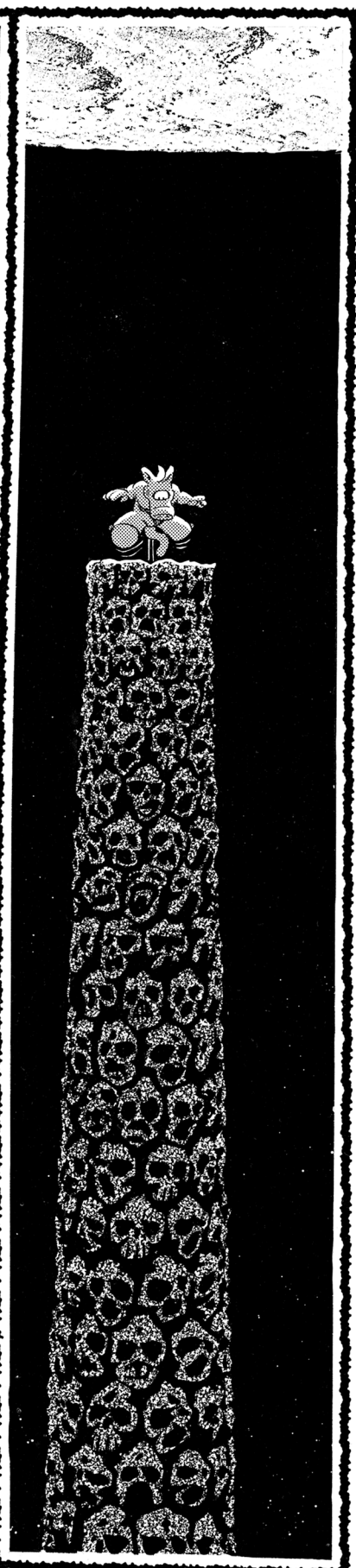
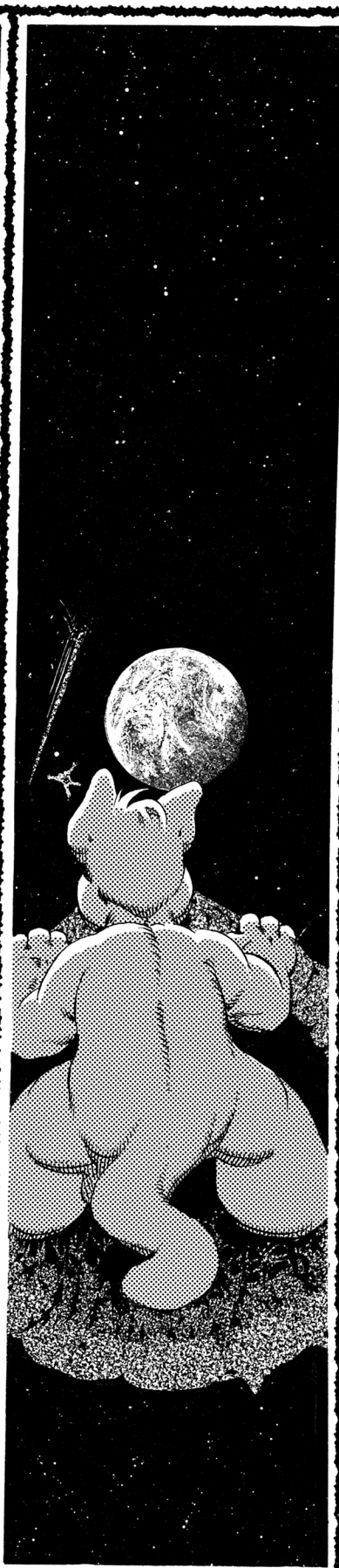
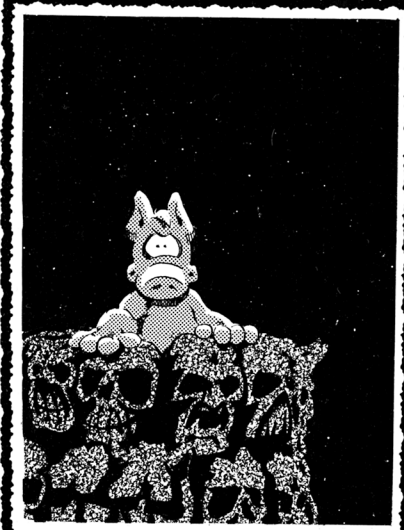














N E X T

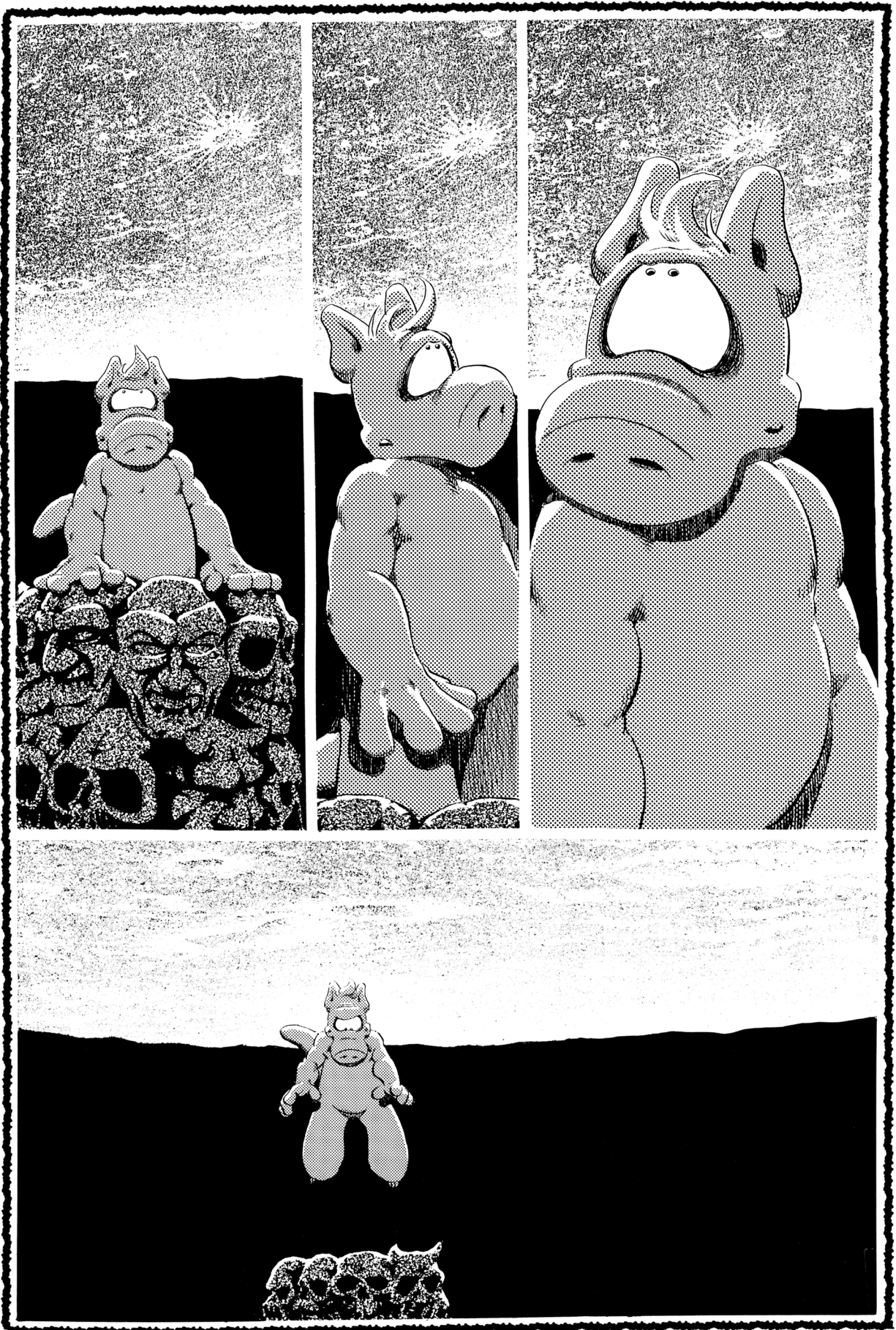
W A L K I N G O N T H E M O O N

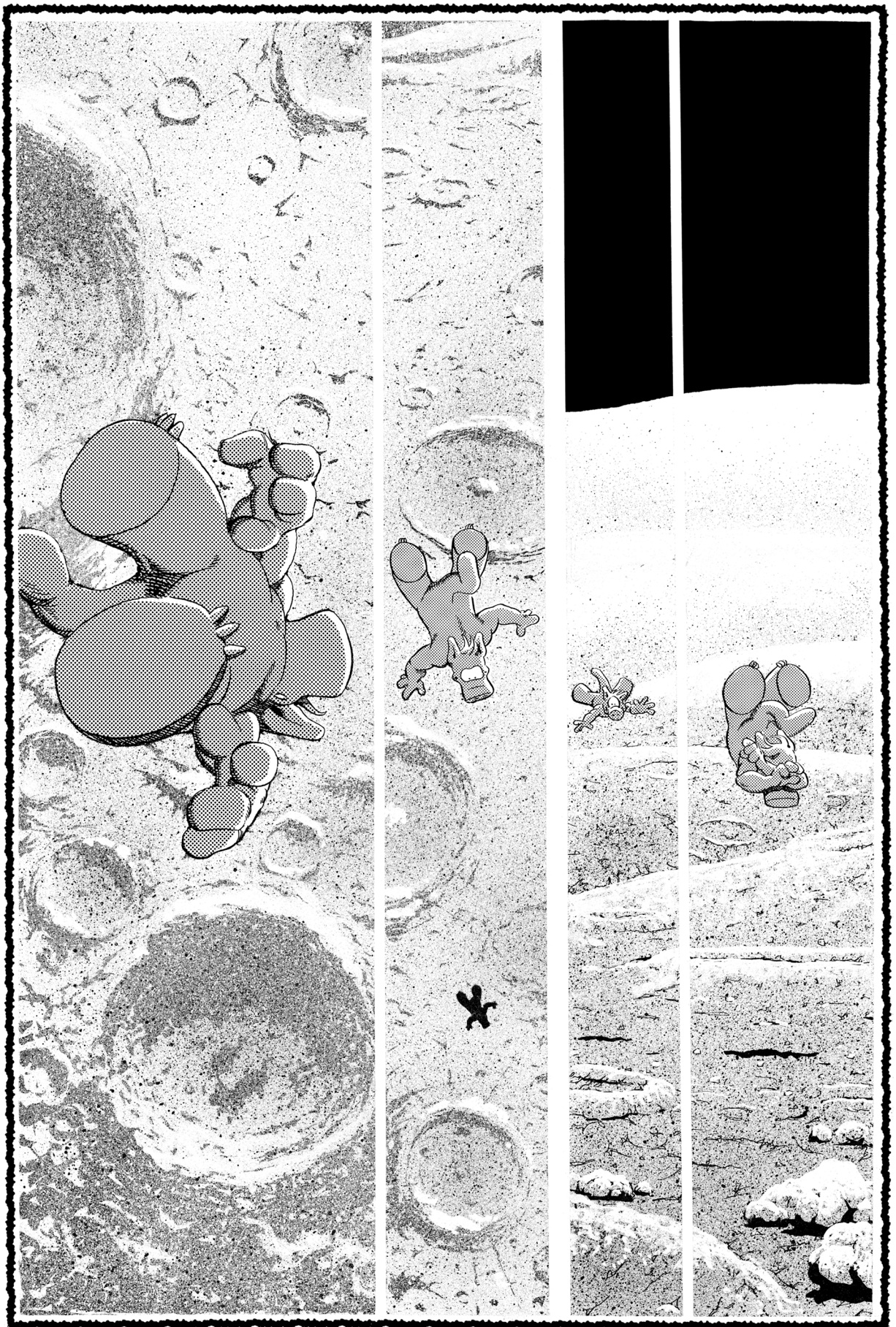
BOOK SEVEN
Walking On The Moon

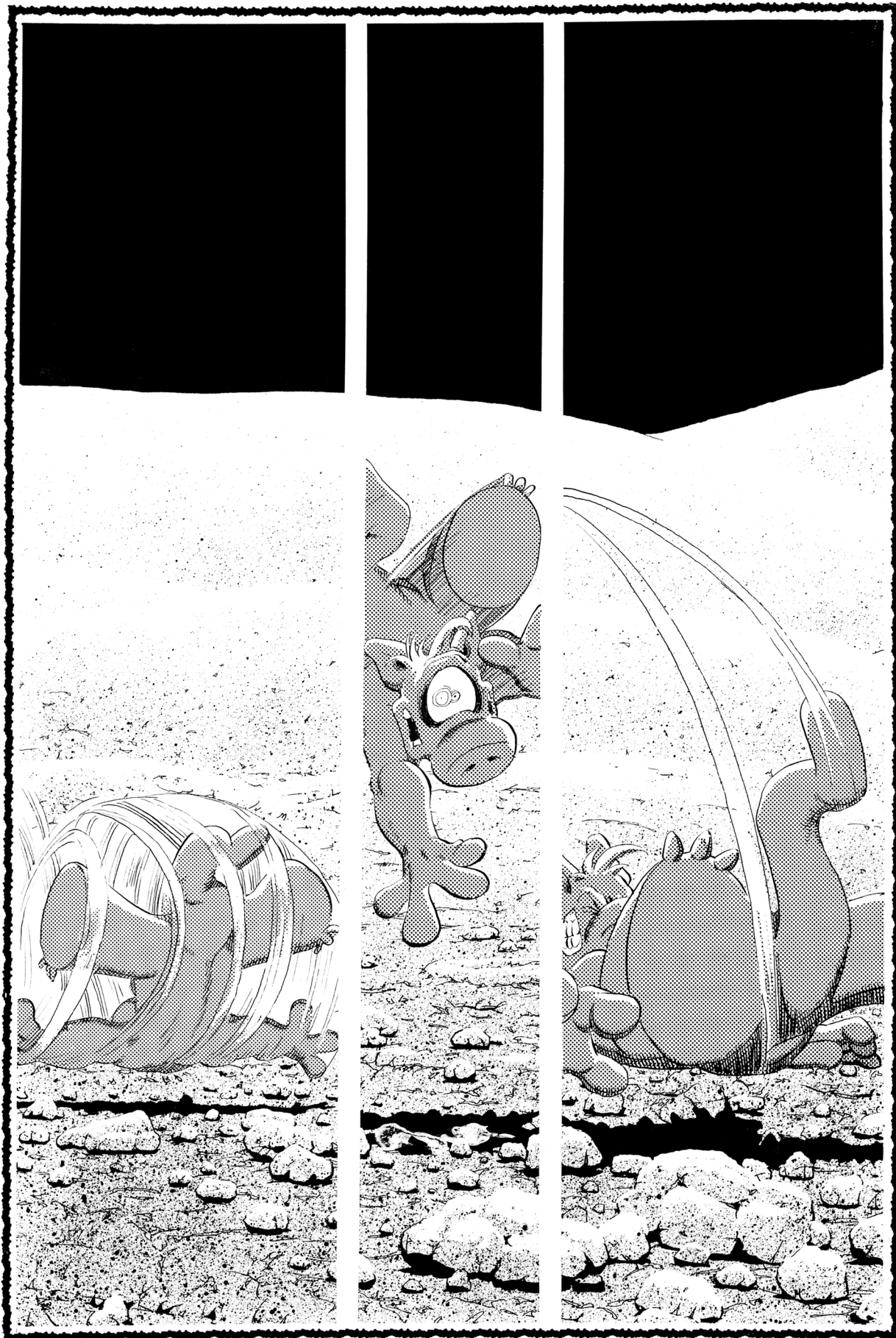


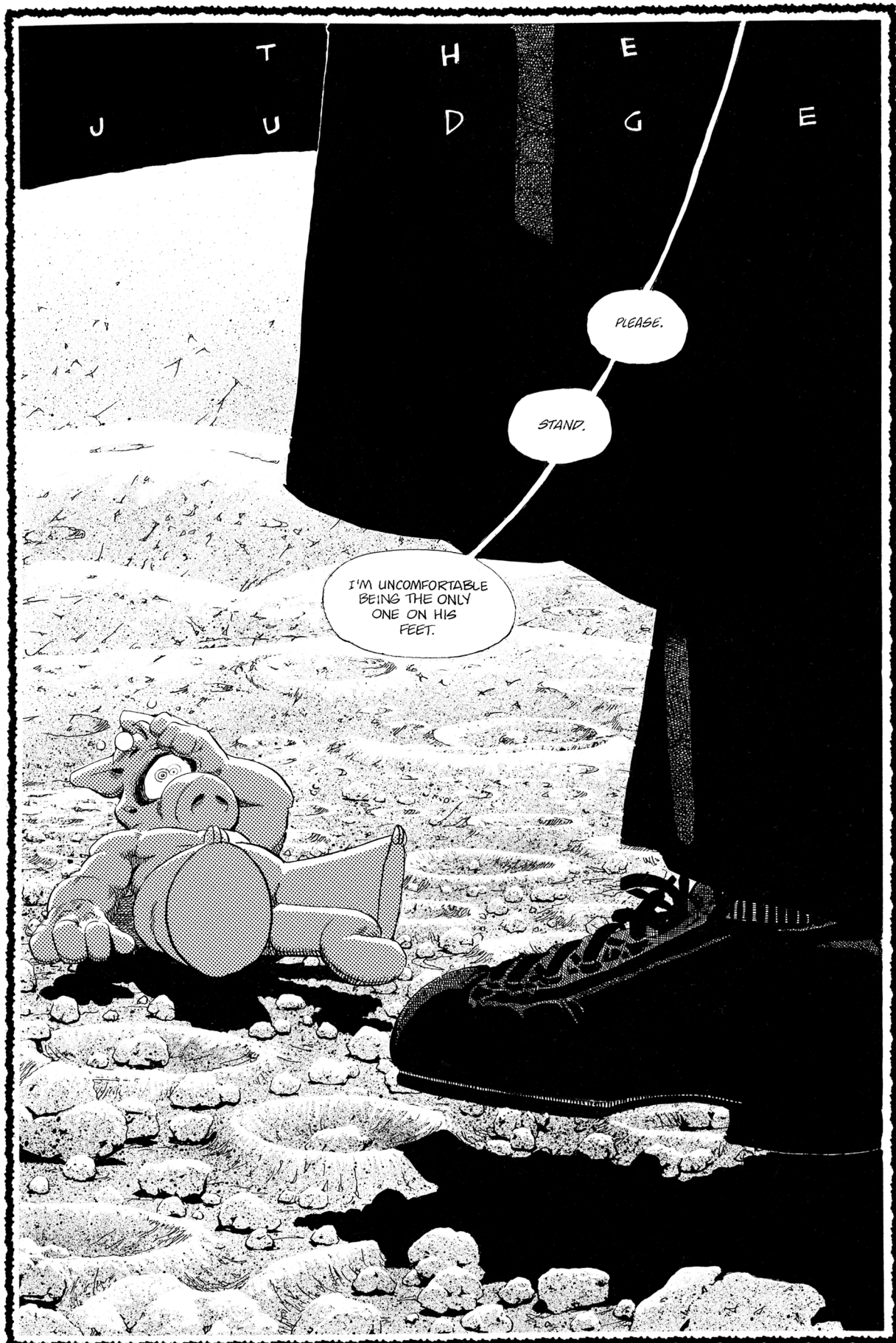
Walking ON The MOON

S E V E N



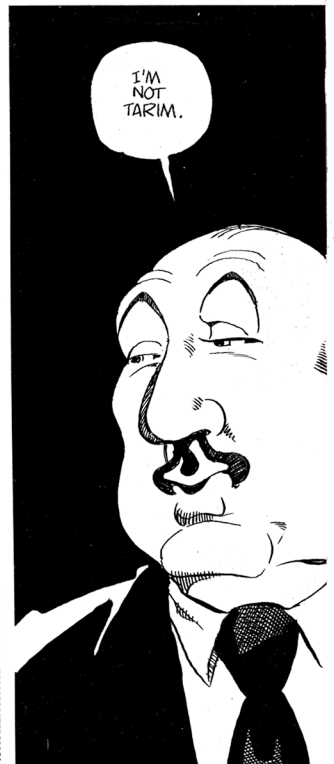
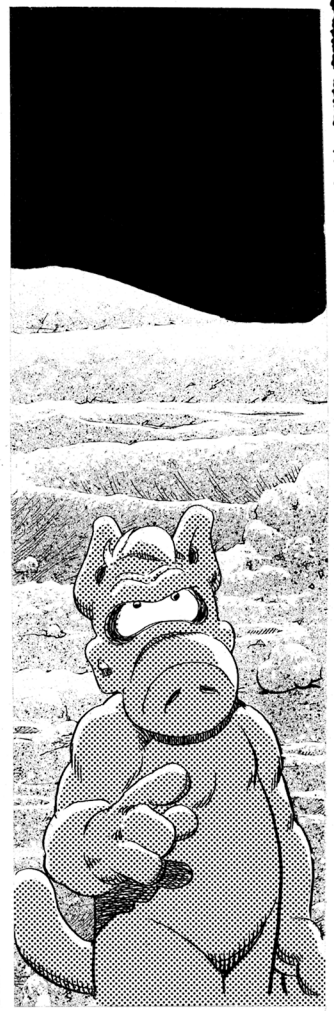


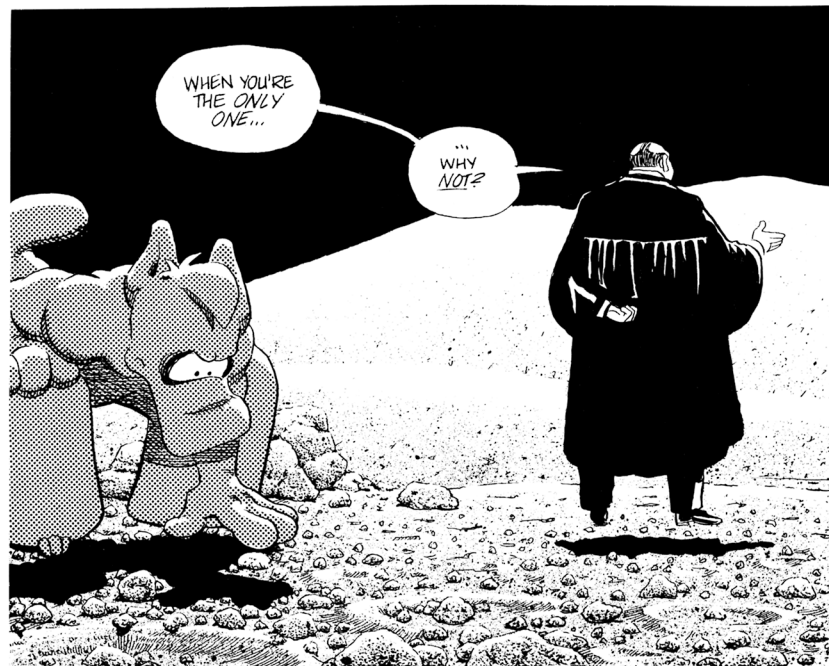


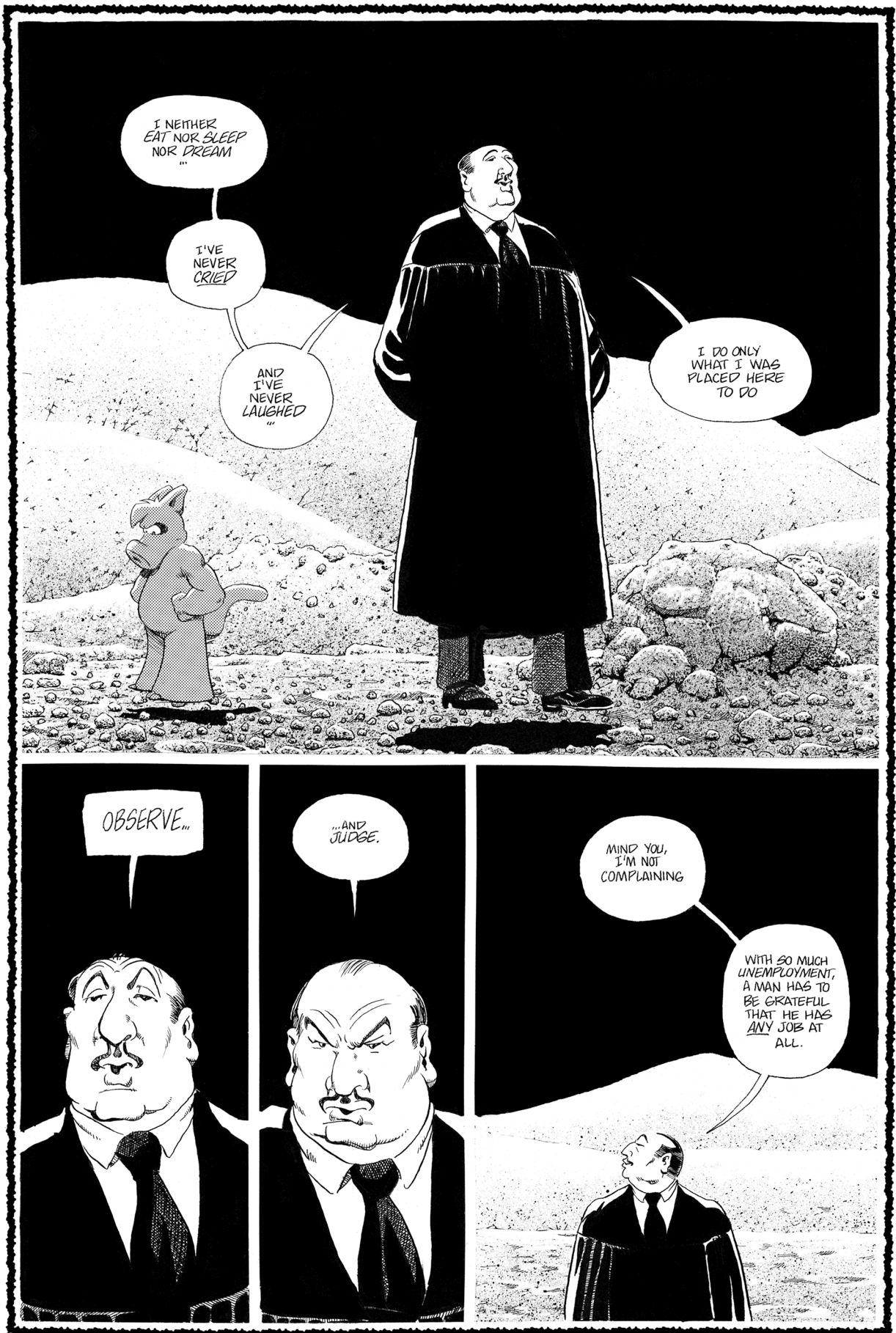


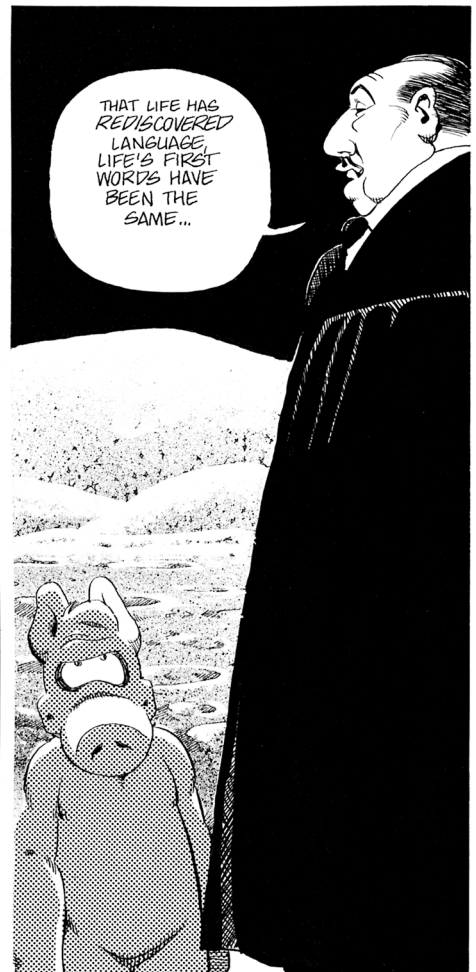
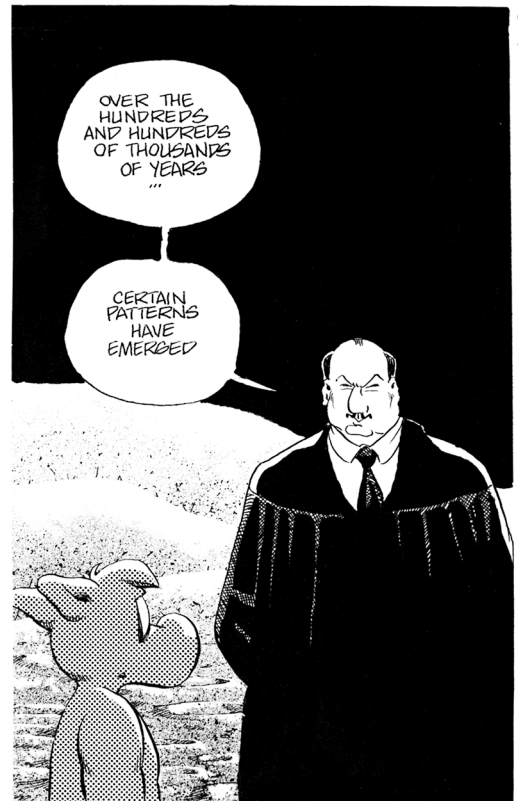
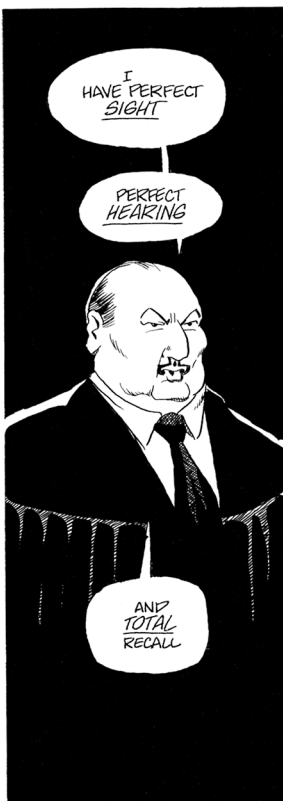
with apologies to JULES FEIFFER and LOU JACOBI













"GIVE
ME"

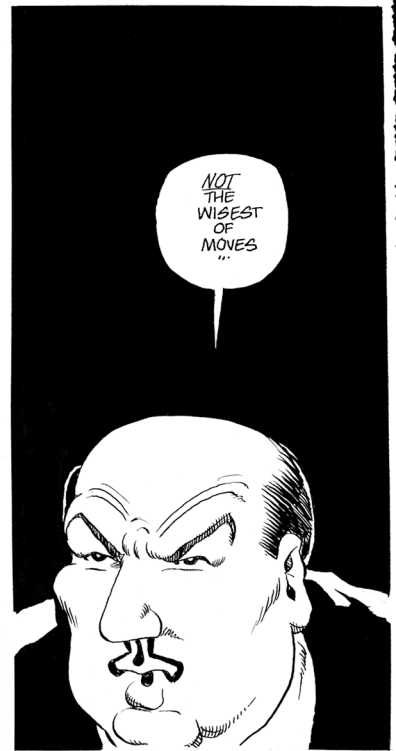
WEISSHAUPT
WOULD HAVE
LOVED
THAT PART
...

WHETHER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT
THE GREAT DINOSAUR CIVILISATIONS,
WIPE OUT WHEN THEY INVENTED
A HAIRSPRAY THAT REDUCED THE
PURE OXYGEN CONTENT OF THE
AIR BY HALF...

OR THE GIANT WALKING
REDWOODS WHO CREATED
THE ATMOSPHERE OF PURE
OXYGEN IN THE FIRST PLACE
WHEN THEY EXPLODED THE
FIRST SODIUM CHLORIDE BOMB
...

IT'S BEEN
ONE THING
AFTER ANOTHER



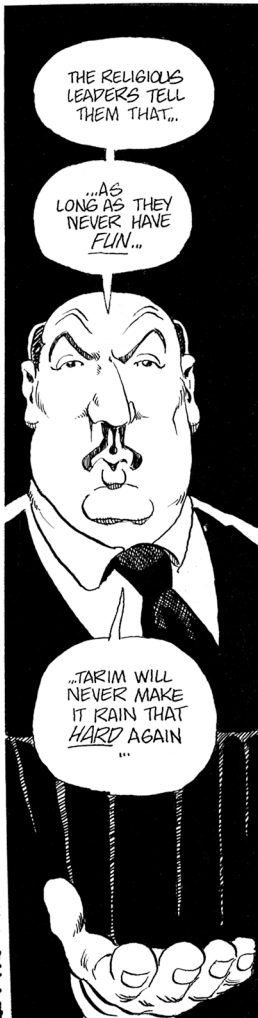


WHEN THE
WATERS
RECEIVE
...

THE SURVIVING MEMBERS
OF WHATEVER SOCIETY
IS AROUND AT THE
TIME...

TURN TO THEIR
RELIGIOUS LEADERS
FOR AN EXPLANATION

NOT
THE
WISEST
OF
MOVES
...



THE RELIGIOUS
LEADERS TELL
THEM THAT...

...AS
LONG AS THEY
NEVER HAVE
FLIN...

...TARIM WILL
NEVER MAKE
IT RAIN THAT
HARD AGAIN
...

SO...

FOR A
HUNDRED
YEARS
...

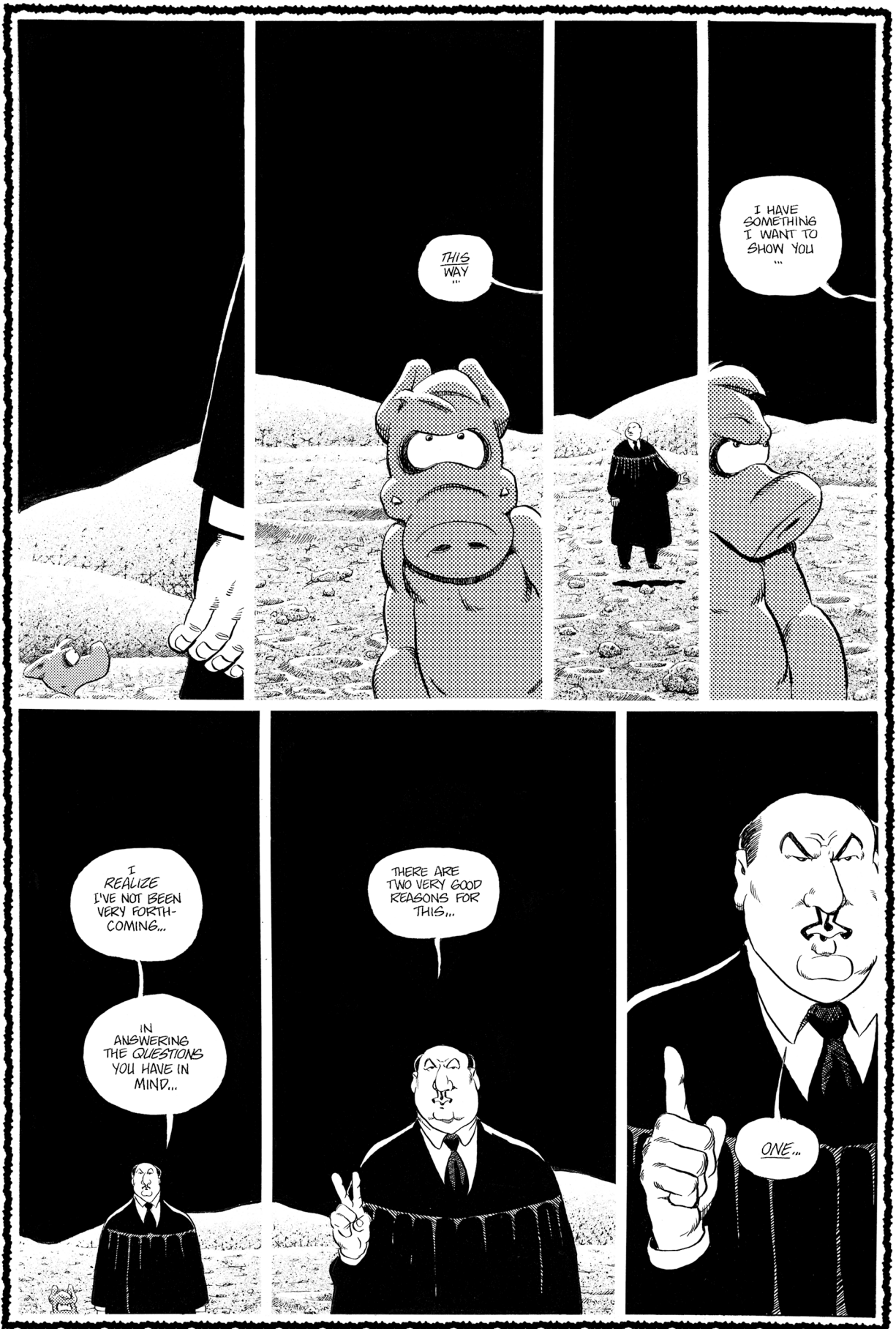
I GET TO
WATCH
...

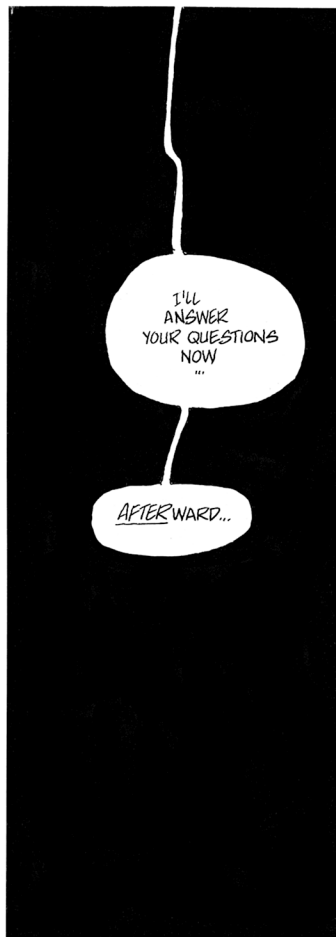
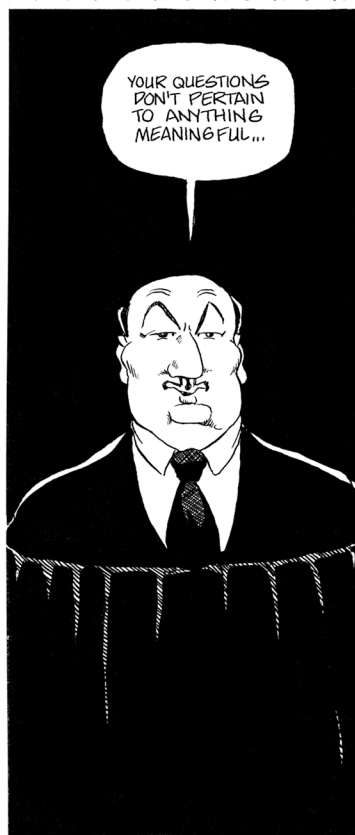
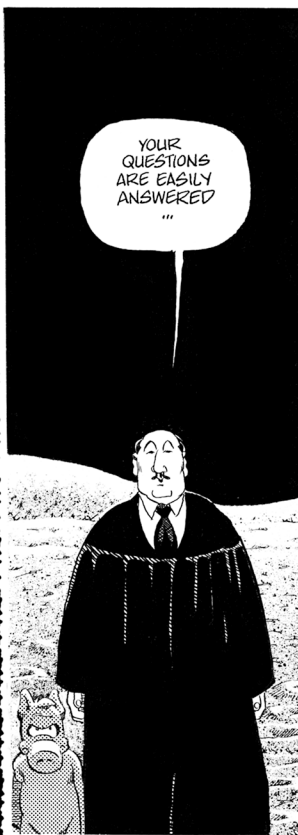
AND
LISTEN
TO...

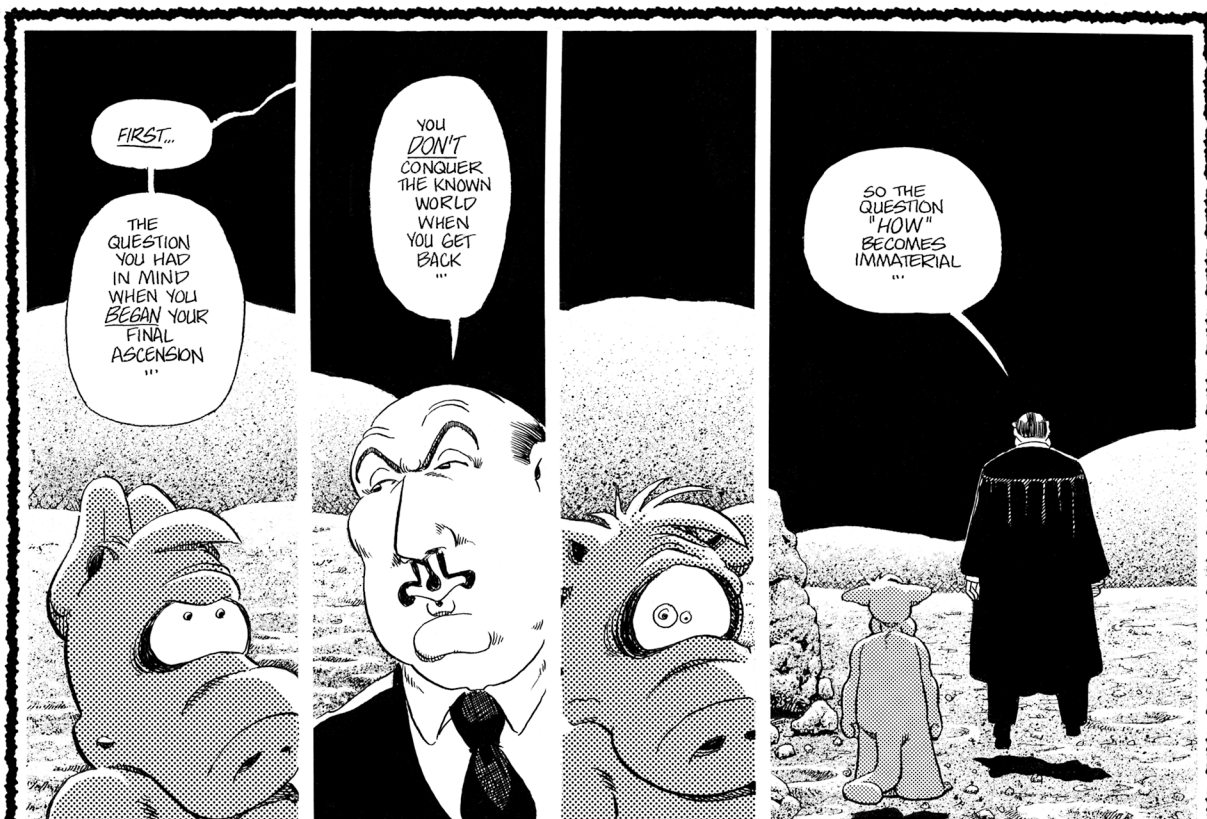
A
WORLD FULL
OF PEOPLE, ALL
ACTING LIKE
PRIESTS
...

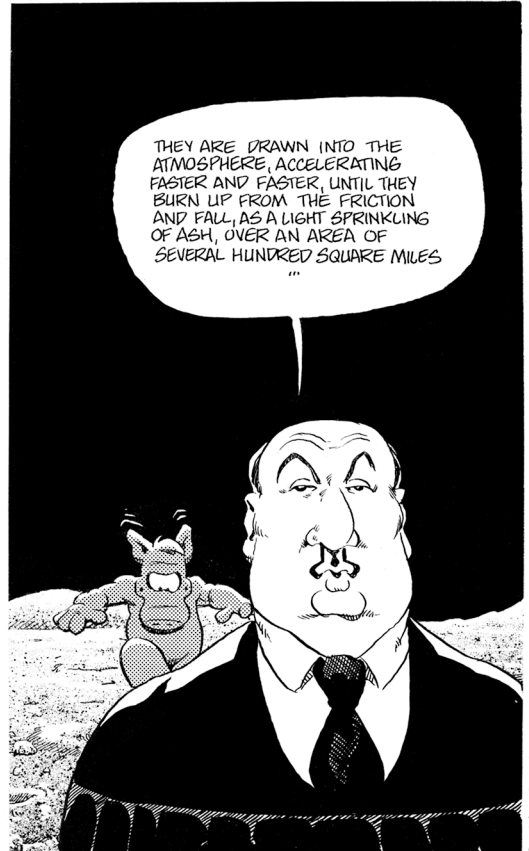
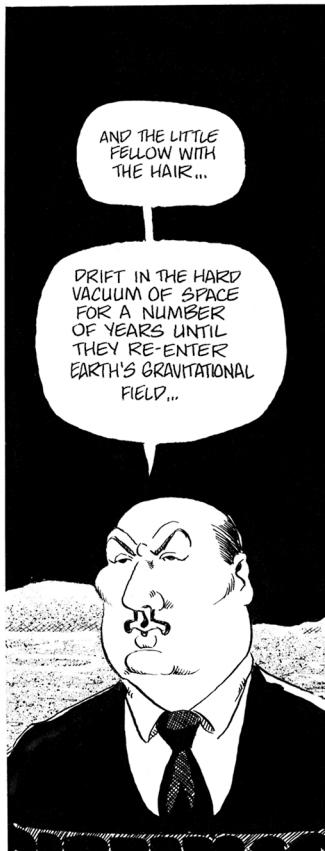
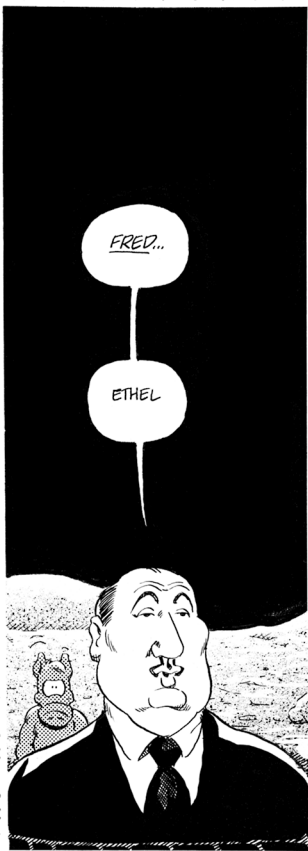
YOU CAN TRUST
ME WHEN I TELL
YOU...

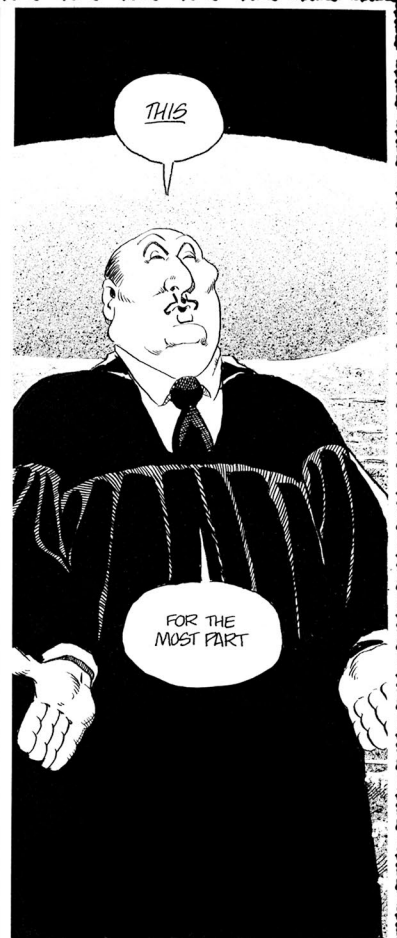
IT ADDS A WHOLE
NEW DIMENSION
TO THE WORD
"BORING"...

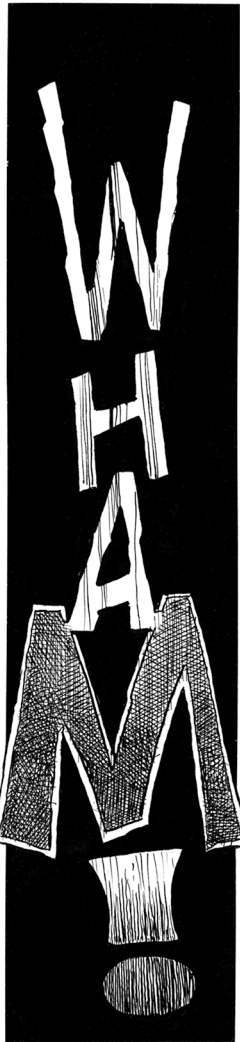
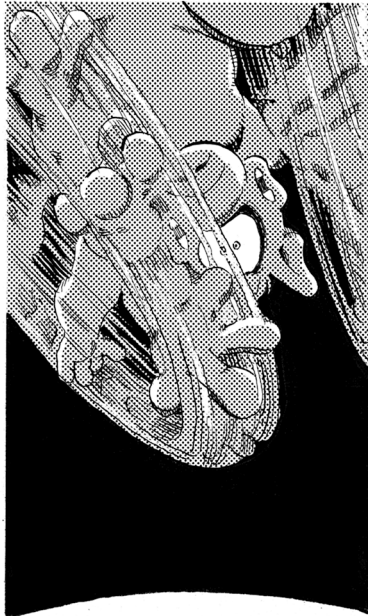


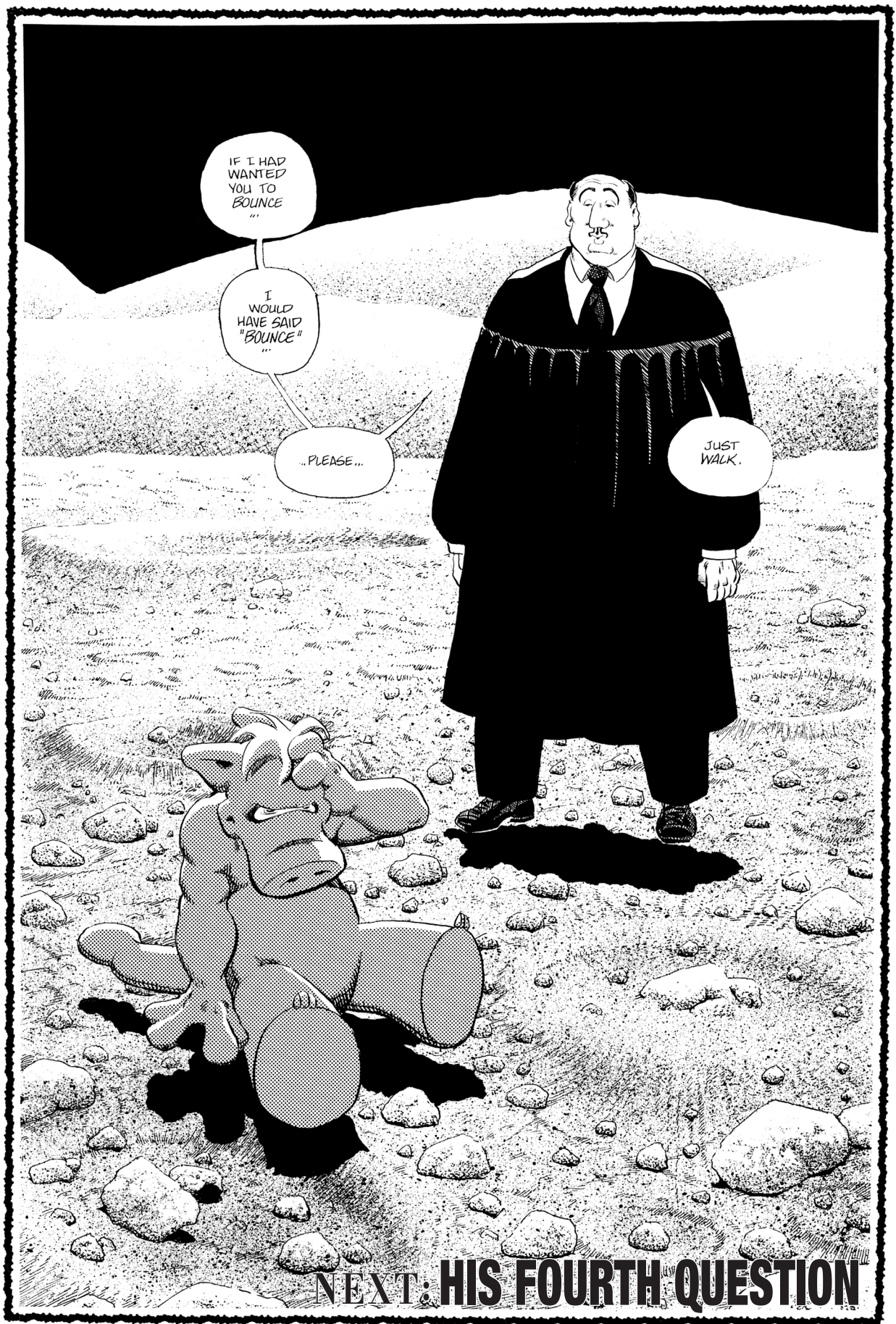


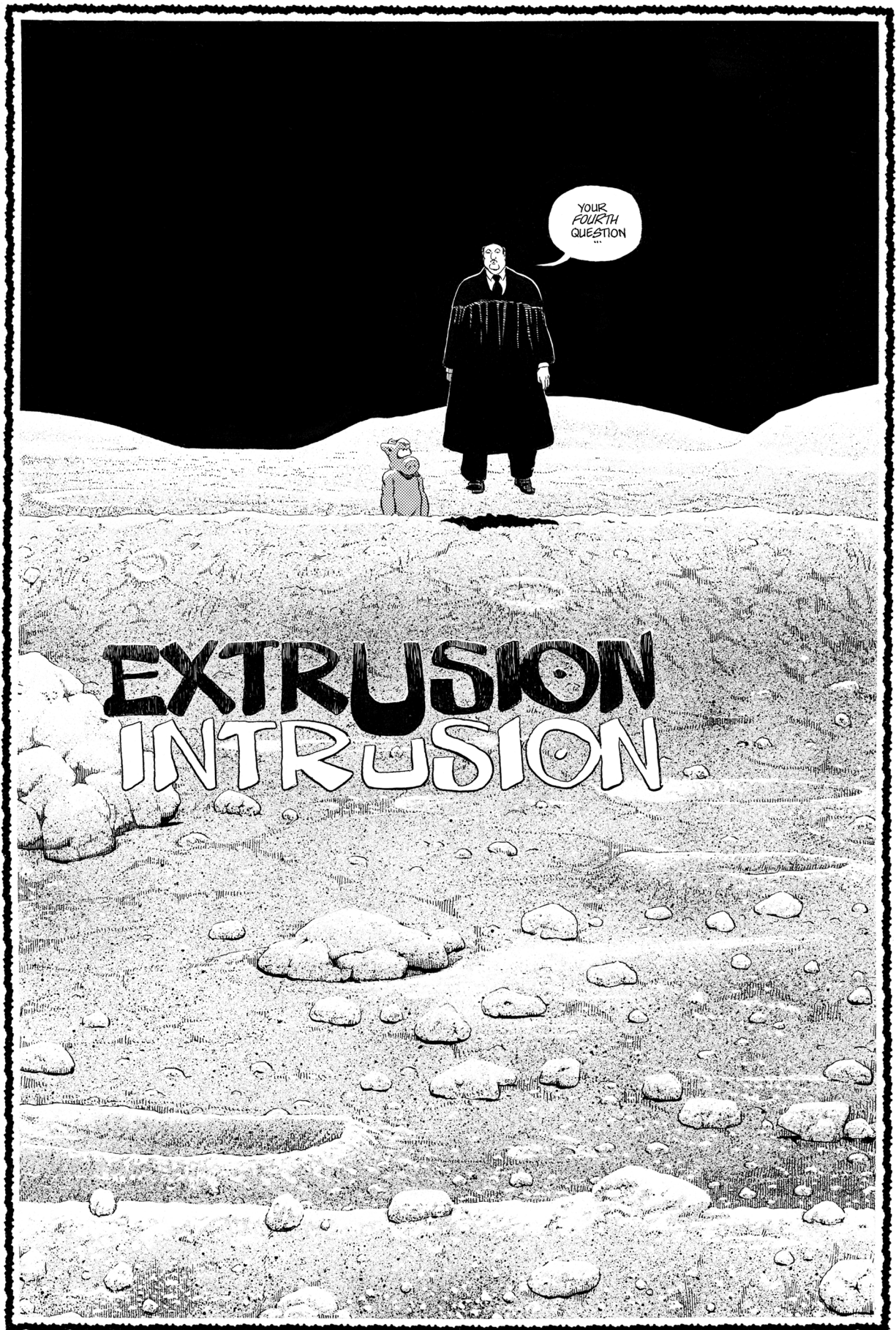










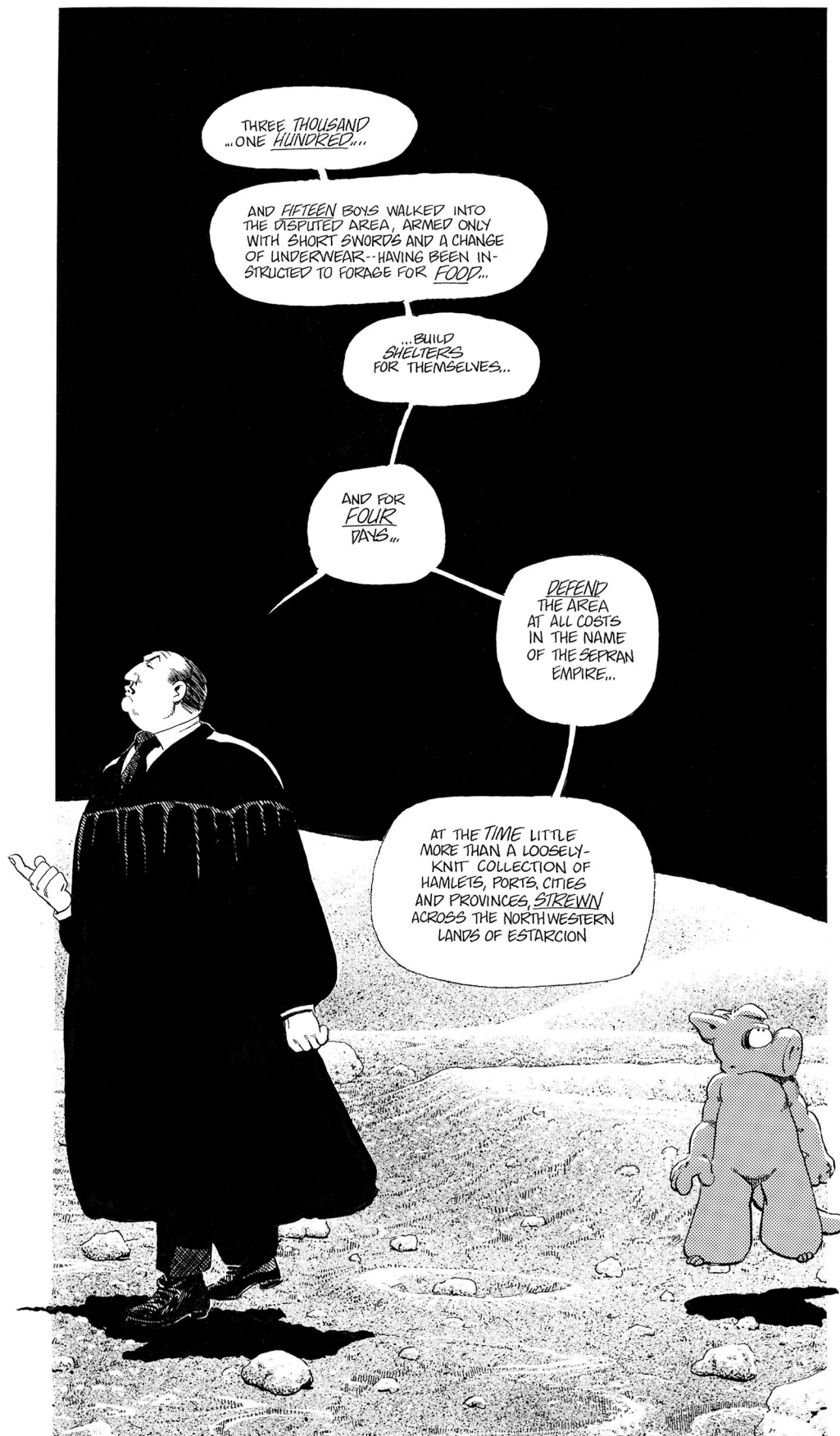


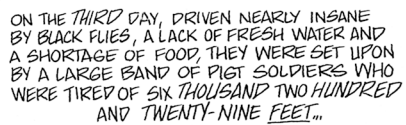
SUENTEUS FO THE FIRST-- THANK GOD HE'S NOT ALIVE TODAY -- BEGAN HIS MILITARY CAREER RECRUITING YOUNG BOYS BARELY OUT OF ADOLESCENCE INTO THE HARSHTEST IMAGINABLE TRAINING PROGRAM TWENTY MILES WITHIN THE DISPUTED BOUNDARIES OF THE RED MARCHES...

...DIRECTLY ABOVE THE EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF UNDERGROUND CITIES WHICH WERE CONSTRUCTED AND HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED BY THE PIGT RACES FOR SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS SINCE THE SUDDEN AND RELATIVELY UNTIMELY DEMISE OF THE BLACK TOWER EMPIRE...

ABOUT WHICH LITTLE IS DOCUMENTED, LESS IS SUSPECTED AND ALMOST NOTHING IS KNOWN FOR SURE.







ON THE THIRD DAY, DRIVEN NEARLY INSANE BY BLACK FLIES, A LACK OF FRESH WATER AND A SHORTAGE OF FOOD, THEY WERE SET UPON BY A LARGE BAND OF PIGT SOLDIERS WHO WERE TIRED OF SIX THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINE FEET...

ONE OF THE BOYS WAS AN AMPLUTEE --

...KNOCKING SMALL CLUMPS OF EARTH OFF OF THEIR SECRET UNDERGROUND CEILING INTO THEIR SECRET UNDERGROUND SOUP BOWLS...

BY DINNER TIME HALF OF THE BOYS HAD BEEN KILLED...

BY MIDNIGHT WHEN THE PIGTS RETREATED, THERE WERE ONLY FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHT OF THE ORIGINAL EXPEDITION REMAINING...



THROUGH THE
SPRING...

THE
SUMMER

...AND INTO THE FALL...
SUENTELS FO CONTINUED
THE PROCESS...

EACH TIME SENDING EXACTLY
THREE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED
AND FIFTEEN BOYS INTO THE
WILDS OF THE RED MARCHES...

EACH TIME DEMANDING THAT
THEY DEFEND THE AREA
WITH THEIR LIVES FOR FOUR
DAYS

AND EACH TIME ENDING UP WITH A FEW HUNDRED
AND SOME-ODD SURVIVORS WHO RETURNED TO THE
SEPRAN LANDS SCARRED, WEARY, BUT ALIVE--
AND WITH A DEFINITE ENTHUSIASM FOR BLOODSHED
...UNTIL AT LAST... HE HAD A FORCE OF FOUR THOUSAND
SIX HUNDRED AND TWELVE DEDICATED AND PRACTISED
KILLERS...

FOUR THOUSAND
SIX HUNDRED AND FOUR
OF WHOM COULD HAVE
SHAVED WITH AN
ABRASIVE WASHCLOTH.



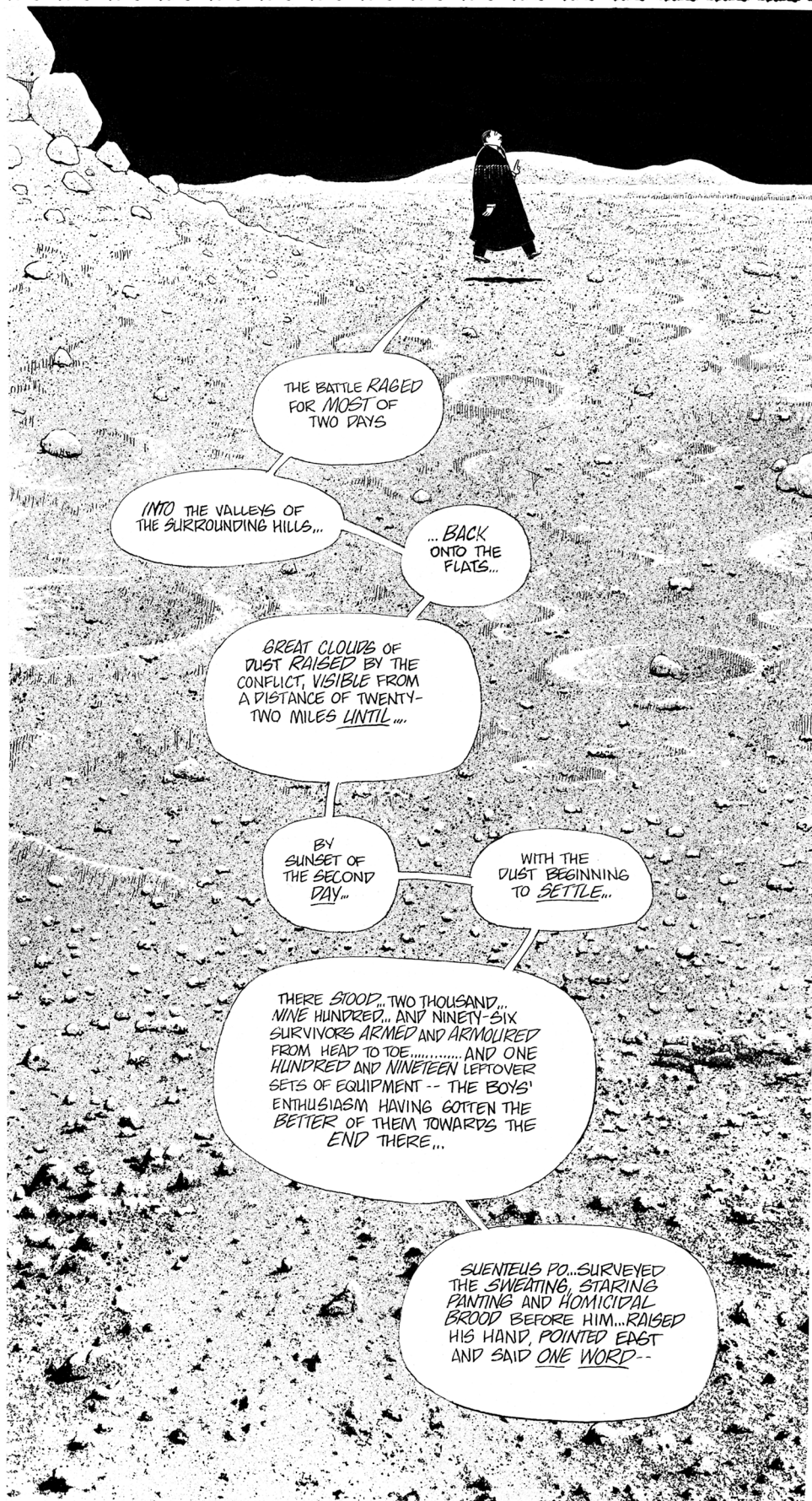
FINALLY...

THAT
HARVEST
SEASON

...JUST AFTER THE GRAIN
HAD BEEN STORED AND
THE APPLE CIDER WAS
STARTING TO TURN...

...HE LED THE FOUR THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED
AND TWELVE SURVIVORS OUT ONTO THE SALT
FLATS NORTH OF BERREA-- FORMED IN PART BY
THE DETONATION OF THE SODIUM CHLORIDE
BOMB BY THE SMART PUNK REDWOODS-- AND
THERE SHOWED THEM-- ROW UPON ROW-- GLEAMING
IN THE BRILLIANT SUNSHINE-- THREE THOUSAND
ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN FULL SUITS OF
ARMOUR-- SHORT SWORDS, LONG SWORDS,
LONG BOWS, CROSS BOWS, SHIELDS, CHAIN-
MAIL ...AND ASSORTED DIRKS, DAGGERS,
AND HELMETS...

THEY
GOT
THE
IDEA



THE BATTLE RAGED
FOR MOST OF
TWO DAYS

INTO THE VALLEYS OF
THE SURROUNDING HILLS...

... BACK
ONTO THE
FLATS...

GREAT CLOUDS OF
DUST RAISED BY THE
CONFLICT, VISIBLE FROM
A DISTANCE OF TWENTY-
TWO MILES UNTIL...

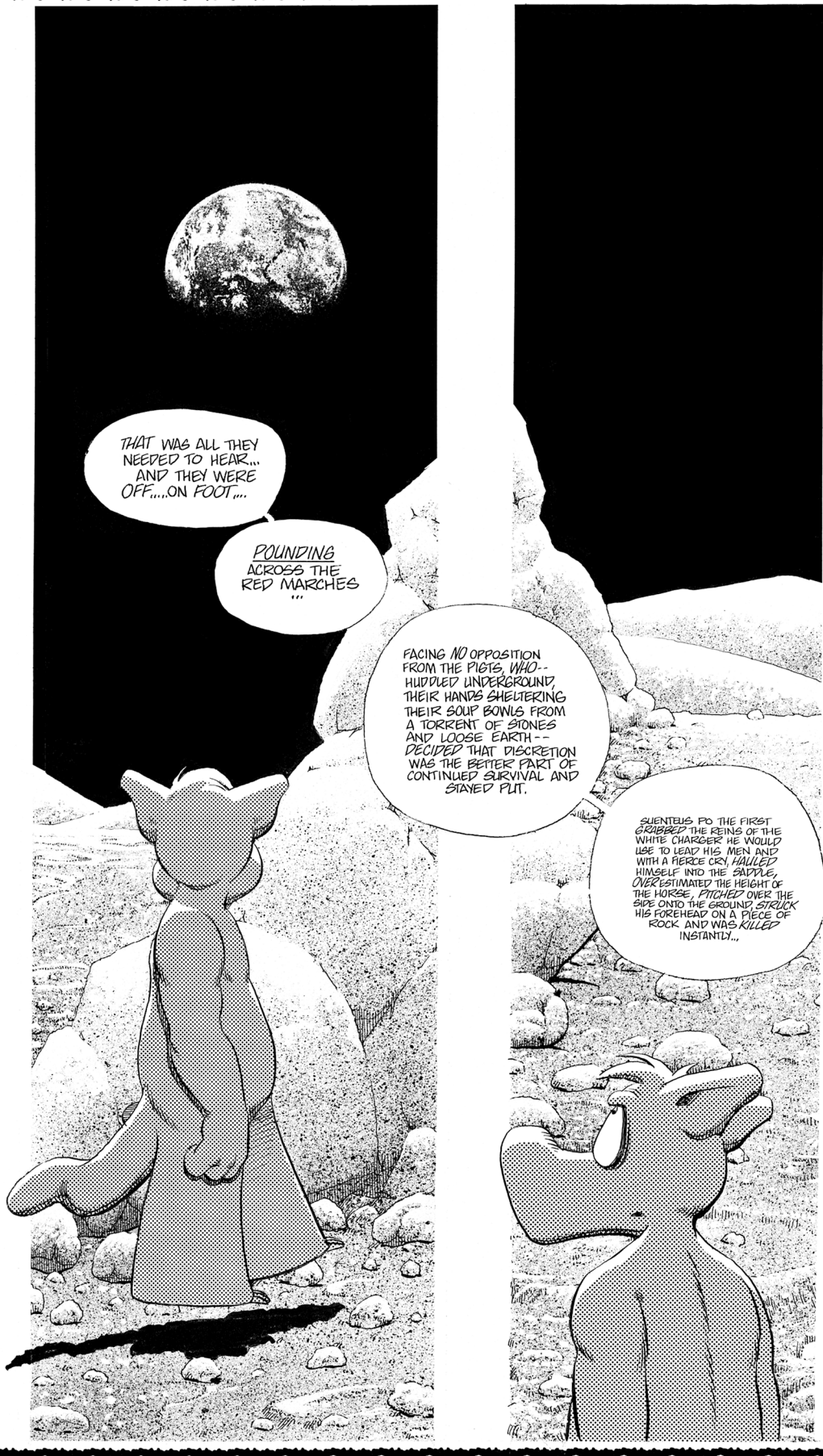
BY
SUNSET OF
THE SECOND
DAY...

WITH THE
DUST BEGINNING
TO SETTLE...

THERE STOOD TWO THOUSAND...
NINE HUNDRED... AND NINETY-SIX
SURVIVORS ARMED AND ARMOURIED
FROM HEAD TO TOE... AND ONE
HUNDRED AND NINETEEN LEFTOVER
SETS OF EQUIPMENT -- THE BOYS'
ENTHUSIASM HAVING GOTTEN THE
BETTER OF THEM TOWARDS THE
END THERE...

SUENTEUS PO... SURVEYED
THE SWEATING, STARING
PANTING AND HOMICIDAL
BROOD BEFORE HIM... RAISED
HIS HAND, POINTED EAST
AND SAID ONE WORD--





THAT WAS ALL THEY
NEEDED TO HEAR...
AND THEY WERE
OFF....ON FOOT....

POUNDING
ACROSS THE
RED MARCHES
...

FACING NO OPPOSITION
FROM THE PIGS, WHO--
HUDDLED UNDERGROUND,
THEIR HANDS SHELTERING
THEIR SOUP BOWLS FROM
A TORRENT OF STONES
AND LOOSE EARTH--
DECIDED THAT DISCRETION
WAS THE BETTER PART OF
CONTINUED SURVIVAL AND
STAYED PUT.

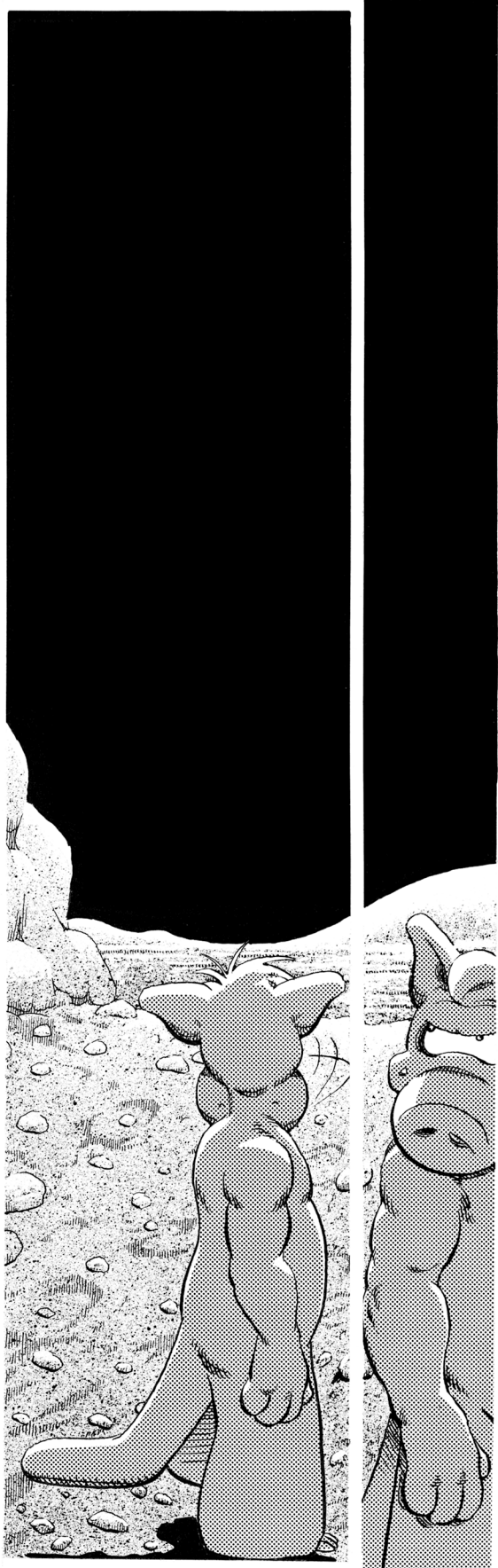
SUENTUS, FOR THE FIRST
GRABBED THE REINS OF THE
WHITE CHARGER HE WOULD
USE TO LEAD HIS MEN AND
WITH A FIERCE CRY, HAULED
HIMSELF INTO THE SADDLE.
OVERESTIMATED THE HEIGHT OF
THE HORSE, PITCHED OVER THE
SIDE ONTO THE GROUND, STRUCK
HIS FOREHEAD ON A PIECE OF
ROCK, AND WAS KILLED
INSTANTLY...

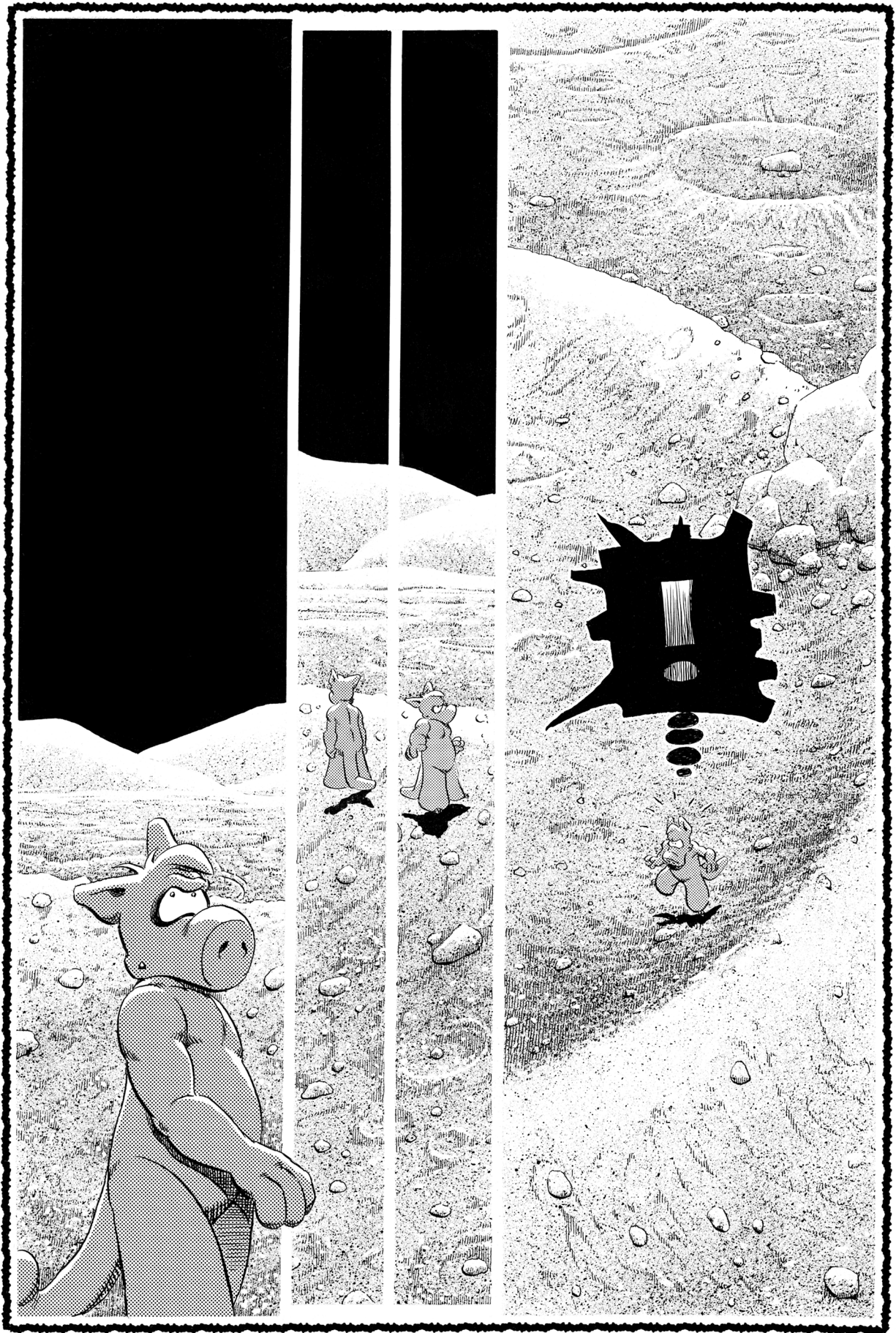
HIS SON, ALFRED -- THANK GOD HE'S NOT ALIVE TODAY -- WAS STANDING NEARBY WAVING A HANKY, AS HIS MOTHER HAD TOLD HIM TO DO, WHEN HE SAW HIS FATHER STRIKE THE GROUND, NEVER ONE TO MISS AN OPPORTUNITY, HE STRODE FORWARD, DECLARED HIMSELF SUICIDELY FOR THE SECOND, LEAPT SWARTLY INTO THE SADDLE OF THE WHITE CHARGER, DISCREETLY KICKED THE FOOT OF HIS DEAD FATHER FROM THE STIRRUP WHERE IT HAD BECOME ENTANGLED AND RODE OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CLOUD OF DUST RETREATING TOWARD THE HORIZON...

AT THIS POINT, ALERTED BY THE MILITARY OUTPOSTS OF NEW LEIST -- SHORTLY TO BE GIVEN HIS PRESENT NAME, NEW SEPT -- CLOVIS THE NINTH, LAST IN A LONG LIST OF DANGEROUSLY INKED POPES TO INHERIT THE PATRACY OF THE EASTERN CHURCH, A HEMOPHILIAC WITH A CLEFT PALATE AND AN LUXURIOUS INTEREST IN YOUNG BOYS, DECIDED THAT BETRAYAL WAS THE BETTER PART OF INDECISION, INQUIRED THE EXORCIS MINARD, INSTRUCTED HIS PERSONAL GUARD, BY MEANS OF SURGICAL ROCK SLIDES TO CLOSE ALL AVENUES TO THE UPPER CITY, THEREBY LEAVING THE LOWER CITY TO THE NON-EXISTENT MERCY OF THE INVADING FORCES...

FROM THERE IT WAS A MATTER OF HUNDREDS BEFORE THE FIRST SHINE OF THE OFFICIAL PAPER IN THE DISTANCE...

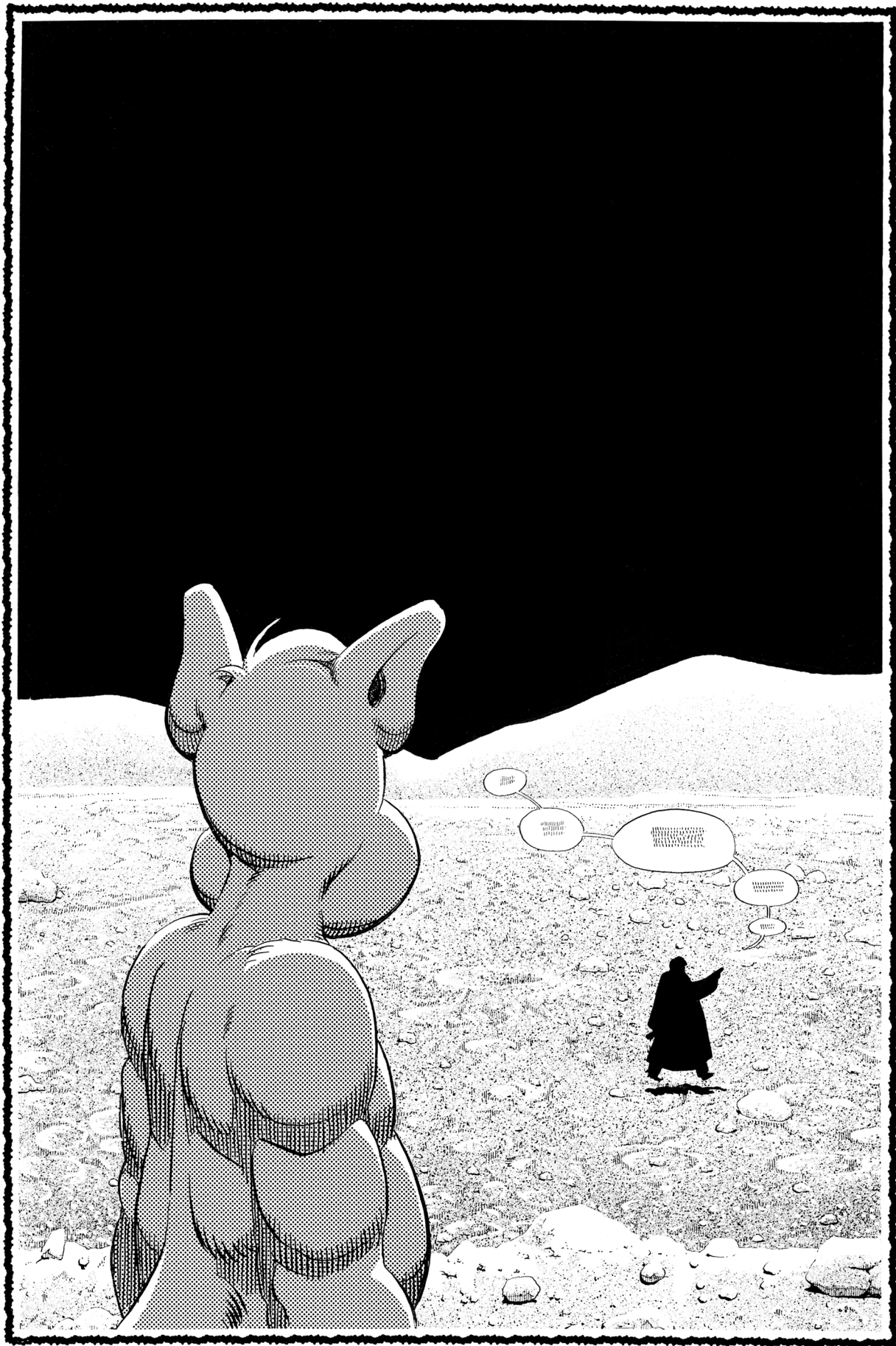
?











AND SO--
FOR WEEKS AFTER
-- YOU WON'T BE
ABLE TO SWING A
DEAD CAT IN
JERUSALEM

WITHOUT
HITTING SOMEONE
DESCENDED FROM
THE HOUSE OF
DAVID...

ANOINTED
BY A CLOSE
RELATIVE

...RIDING
INTO TOWN
ON A DONKEY.

NOW

TO RETURN TO
THE MEANINGFUL
ISSUES AT HAND
"

A LITTLE LESS THAN SIX OR SO
THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW,
EVIDENCE WILL BE DISCOVERED
THAT, AT ONE TIME, ALL OF THE
ENERGY AND MATTER IN THE
UNIVERSE WAS LOCATED IN A
SINGLE SPOT,...

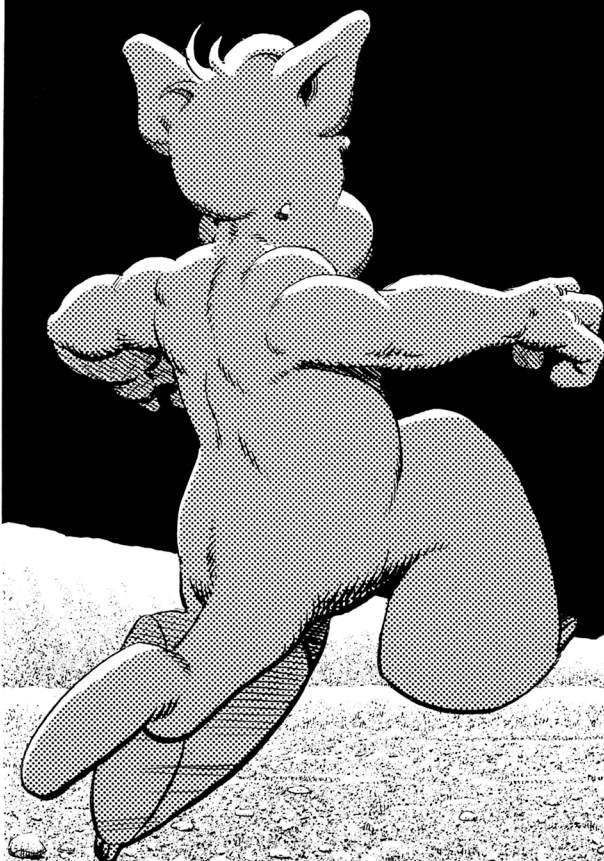
AND THAT, TWENTY BILLION
AND SOME-ODD HUNDRED
MILLION YEARS AGO, IT
SUPER-HEATED TO TRILLIONS
UPON TRILLIONS OF
DEGREES AND...

IN A
MATTER
OF SECONDS

EXPLODED OUTWARD AT NEARLY
UNIMAGINABLE SPEEDS IN THE
SINGULAR AND SEMINAL EVENT
OF CREATION, KNOWN TO THE
GIANT REDWOODS AND MAN-
KIND --

THE DINOSAURS AND THE
FOOT-LONG TELEPATHIC
COCKROACHES HAVING
NO INTEREST IN NOR
WORD FOR "THE
BEGINNING" --

AS "THE
BIG
BANG!"



THE MEN
WHO DISCOVER
THIS EVIDENCE
AND WHO WILL
THEN TAKE IT
UPON THEMSELVES
TO DISPENSE
IT...

...WILL
NOT BE
STORYTELLERS
...

SELF-
EVIDENT

BECAUSE THEY
LEAVE OFF THE
BEGINNING OF
THE STORY.

AND THE
REASON
THEY LEAVE
OFF THE
BEGINNING
OF THE
STORY

IS BECAUSE THE
ONLY BEGINNING
TO THE STORY WITH
WHICH THEY ARE
FAMILIAR

IS A
NON
SEQUITUR

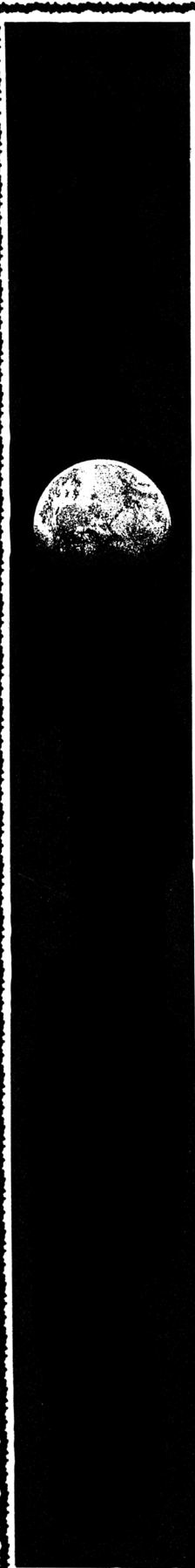


AND THE REASON
THAT THE ONLY
BEGINNING WITH
WHICH THEY ARE
FAMILIAR IS A
NON SEQUITUR

IS THAT
IT WAS
GARBLED...

MANY
THOUSANDS
OF YEARS
AGO

BY A
PRIEST



AND THE REASON
IT WAS GARBLED--
MANY THOUSANDS
OF YEARS AGO--
BY A PRIEST--
IS THAT
GARBLED

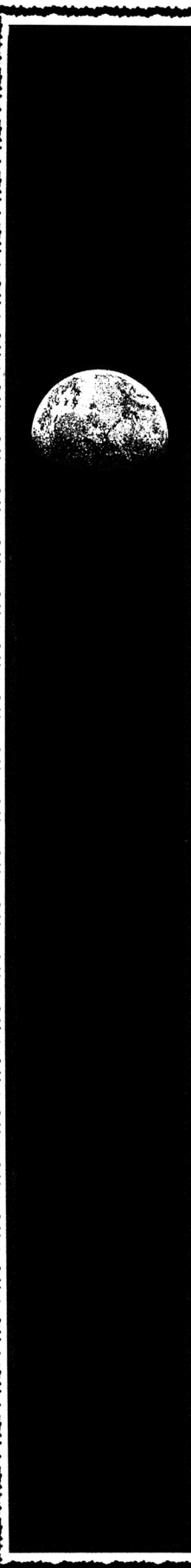
IT WAS
WORTH A
FORTUNE
...

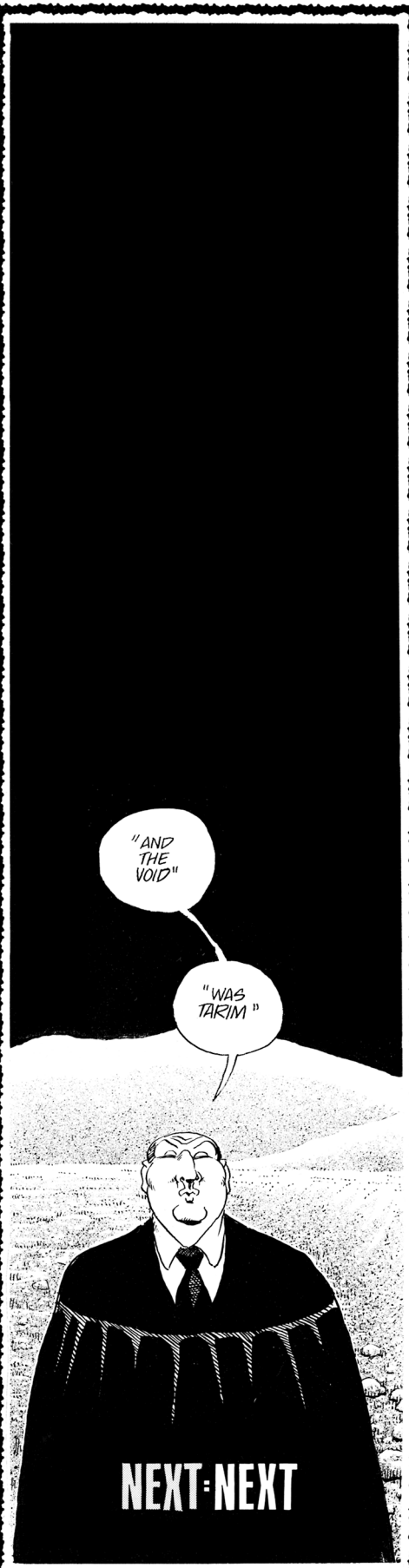
ANYONE
SELLING THE
WORD OF
TARIM

IS EMPLOYED
IN THE WORLD'S
SECOND OLDEST

AND
MOST
LUCRATIVE

PROFESSION





abhorring

PEVOID
WAS TARIM.



vacuums

BUT THAT
WAS LATER
...

AGAIN...

I'M
GETTING
AHEAD OF
MYSELF
...



FOR UNTOLD GENERATIONS
BETWEEN THEM, THE REDWOODS
AND MANKIND HAVE CONTEMPLATED,
AND SPECULATED ON, THE NATURE
OF TARIM...

WHY?

SO THAT THEY
MIGHT FEEL THEM-
SELVES AS ONE WITH
THE UNIVERSE?

SO THEY MIGHT HAVE
A GREATER BOND WITH
THEIR FELLOW TREE
AND FELLOW MAN?

NOT ON YOUR
SWEET LIFE.

THEY CONTEMPLATE
HIM, BECAUSE THEY
WANT TO BE
HIM.



YOU WANT
TO KNOW WHAT
IT'S LIKE TO
BE TARIM?

CLOSE
YOUR
EYES.



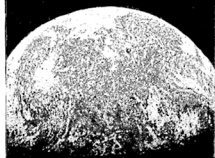
WHEN I'M SPEAKING
MERELY FOR
RHETORICAL
EFFECT...

MY VOICE
GOES UP
AT THE END

PLEASE...

CLOSE
YOUR
EYES
...

THERE.



THAT'S WHAT
IT WAS LIKE
TO BE TARIM.

"IN THE
BEGINNING"

BLACK.

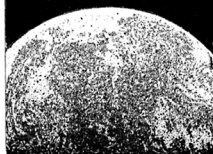
BECAUSE BLACK
IS THE ABSENCE
OF COLOUR

COLD

BECAUSE COLD
IS THE ABSENCE
OF HEAT

SINGULAR.
INFINITE.

AND ONE
THING MORE
..."



AWARE.

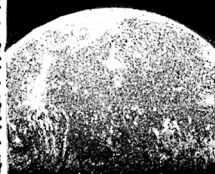
FROM THE NEARLY INFINITE
GAPS OF TRILLIONS UPON
TRILLIONS OF SPHEROID
MILES BETWEEN STARS --
THE MEASUREMENT OF VOLUME
WHEN THERE'S NO LENGTH
AND NO HEIGHT AND NO
BREADTH...

TO THE INFINITESIMAL
SPACE BETWEEN THE
NUCLEI AND THE
ELECTRONS WHICH MAKE
UP THE SMALLEST
COMPONENTS OF THE
AIR YOU BREATHE,
ALL THAT YOU SEE,
AND THE MATERIALS
OF YOUR FLESH, BLOOD,
AND IN YOUR CASE,
FUR...

ACROSS THE ENDLESS
REACHES OF THE
MACROCOSMIC AND
THE MICROCOSMIC
MULTIVERSE

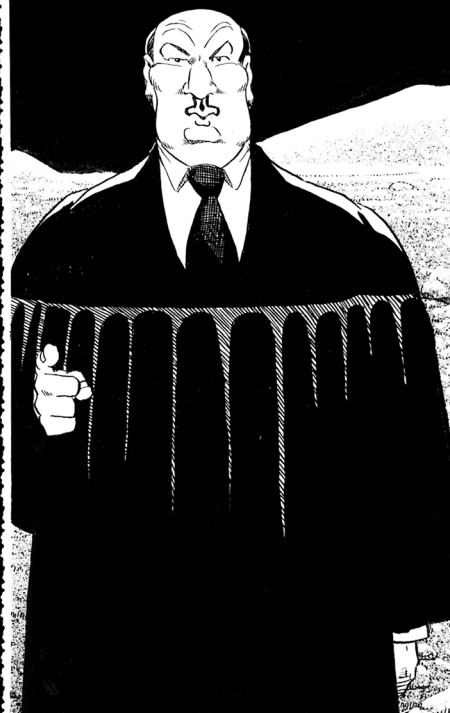
THE VOID
THINKS WITH
A SINGLE
MIND.

THAT SINGLE
MIND IS
TARIM.



CLOSE
YOUR
EYES.

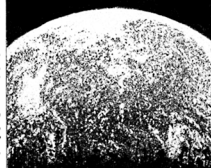
I'M
NOT
FINISHED.



TO SHOW YOU
WHAT HAPPENED
THEN, IT'S NECESSARY
THAT YOU TILT YOUR
HEAD BACK...

A LITTLE
MORE,

AND A
BIT TO
THE
LEFT.



NOW,

OPEN
YOUR
EYES.

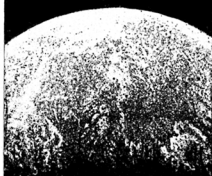


THERE.

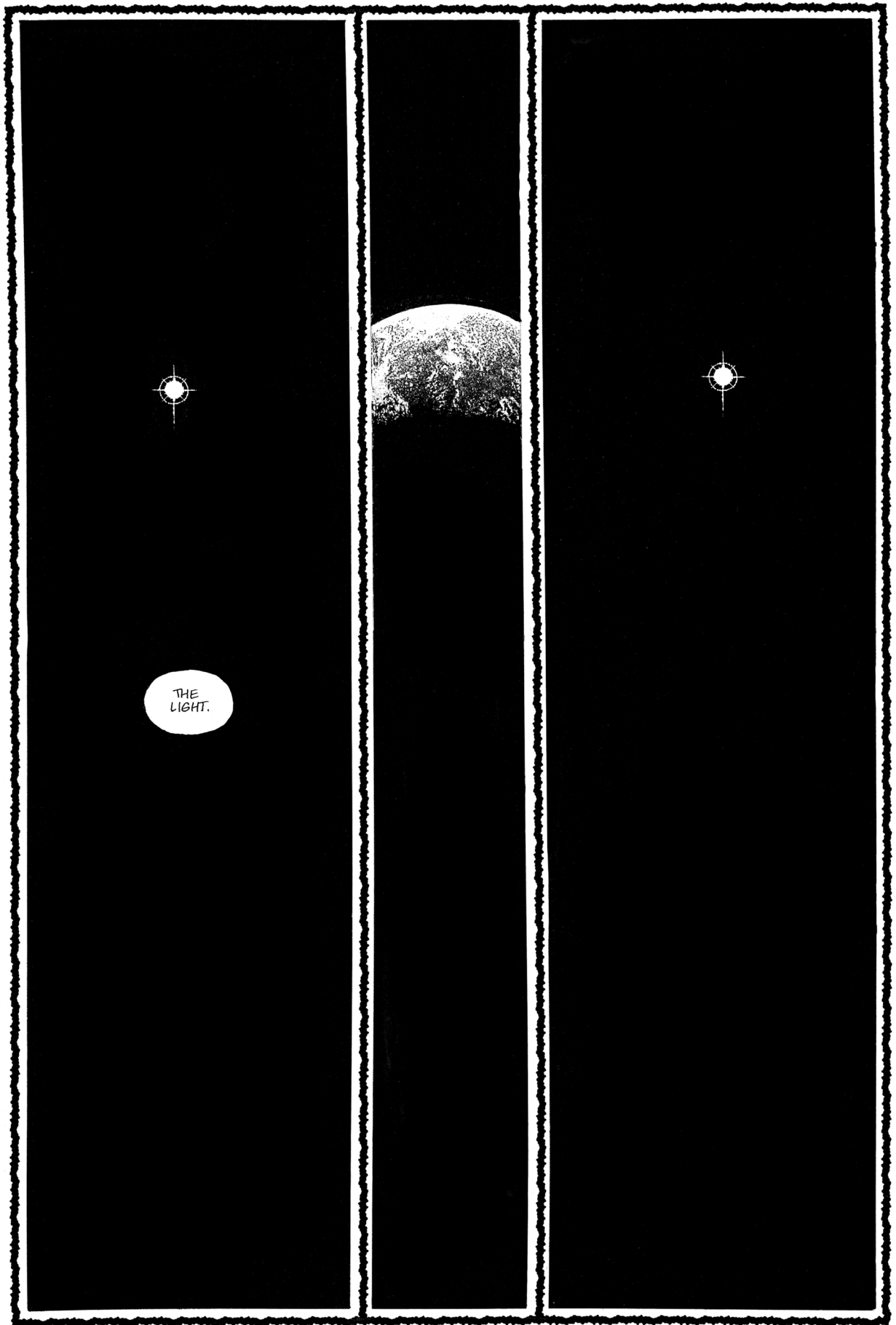
AS
SIMPLE
AS THAT.

ONE
MINUTE
SHE WASN'T
THERE

AND
THE NEXT
MINUTE
SHE WAS.



TERIM.

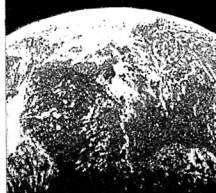




RADIANT,
BEAUTIFUL,

ALIVE!

A TINY
PERFECT
SPOT IN
THE COLD,
DARK FABRIC
OF TARIM'S
BEING



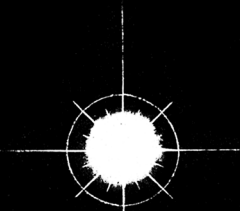
A
PINPOINT...

...OR
MILLIONS
OF MILES
IN DIAMETER.

COMPARED
TO THE VASTNESS
OF THE VOID, THE
DIFFERENCE WAS
NEGLECTIBLE,

FROM AFAR,
SHE ILLUMINATED
TARIM --
BECAME A
FOCUS FOR
HIS AWARENESS

CLOSER...



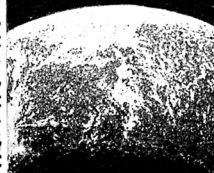
AND
CURRENTS
APPEARED AND
SWAM ON HER
SURFACE.

WAVES OF
BRILLIANT
BLUE-WHITE
LIGHT.

HER GRAVITY
MOLDED THE
VOID; DISTORTED
THE FABRIC
OF TARIM'S
BEING.

EVEN
FROM A DISTANCE
OF QUINTILLIONS
OF MILES, SHE
GAVE FORM TO
THAT WHICH WAS
FORMLESS; LENT
SUBSTANCE TO THE
INSUBSTANTIAL
NIGHT.

CLOSER...

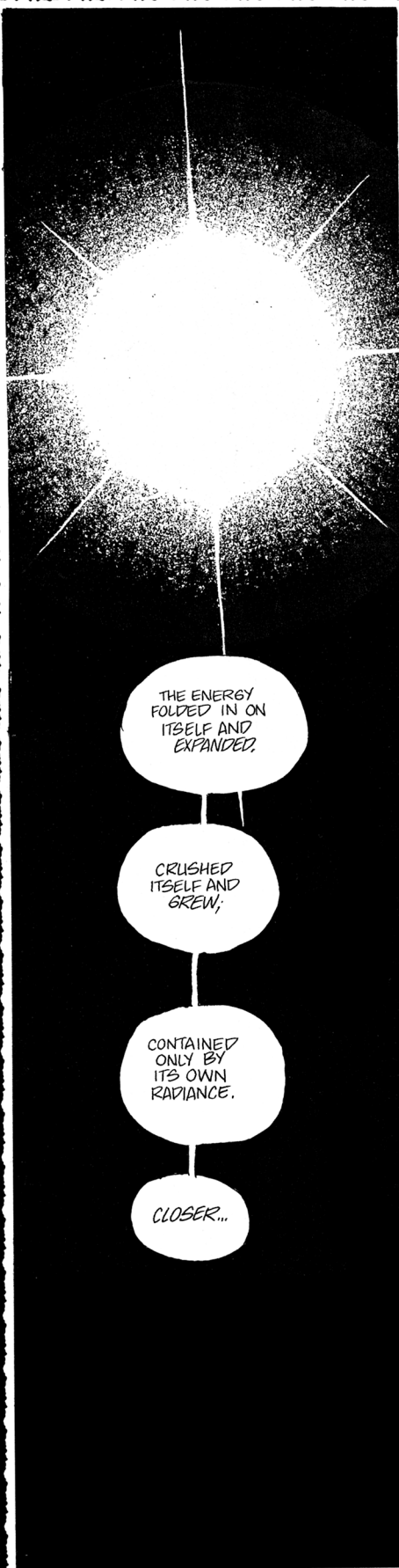


AND THE
PRESSURE
OF THE ALL-
ENCOMPASSING
VOID ON THE
RADIANT, TINY
SPHERE BECAME
PROFOUND..
IRRESISTIBLE

A THIRD
ENTITY CAME
INTO BEING
IN THE HEART
OF THE LIGHT.

ENERGY.
HEAT.

CLOSER...

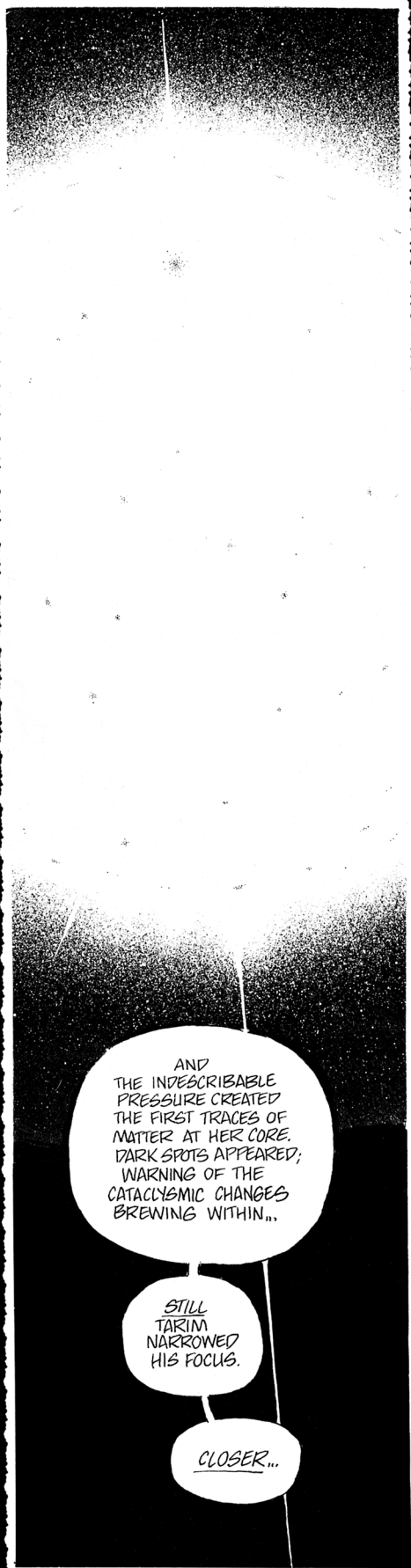


THE ENERGY
FOLDED IN ON
ITSELF AND
EXPANDED.

CRUSHED
ITSELF AND
GREW;

CONTAINED
ONLY BY
ITS OWN
RADIANCE.


CLOSER...



AND
THE INDESCRIBABLE
PRESSURE CREATED
THE FIRST TRACES OF
MATTER AT HER CORE.
DARK SPOTS APPEARED;
WARNING OF THE
CATACLYSMIC CHANGES
BREWING WITHIN...

STILL
TAKIM
NARROWED
HIS FOCUS.

CLOSER...



UNTIL
THE VOID
SEEMED TO
VANISH-- AND
ALL THAT WAS
LEFT WAS HIS
AWARENESS.

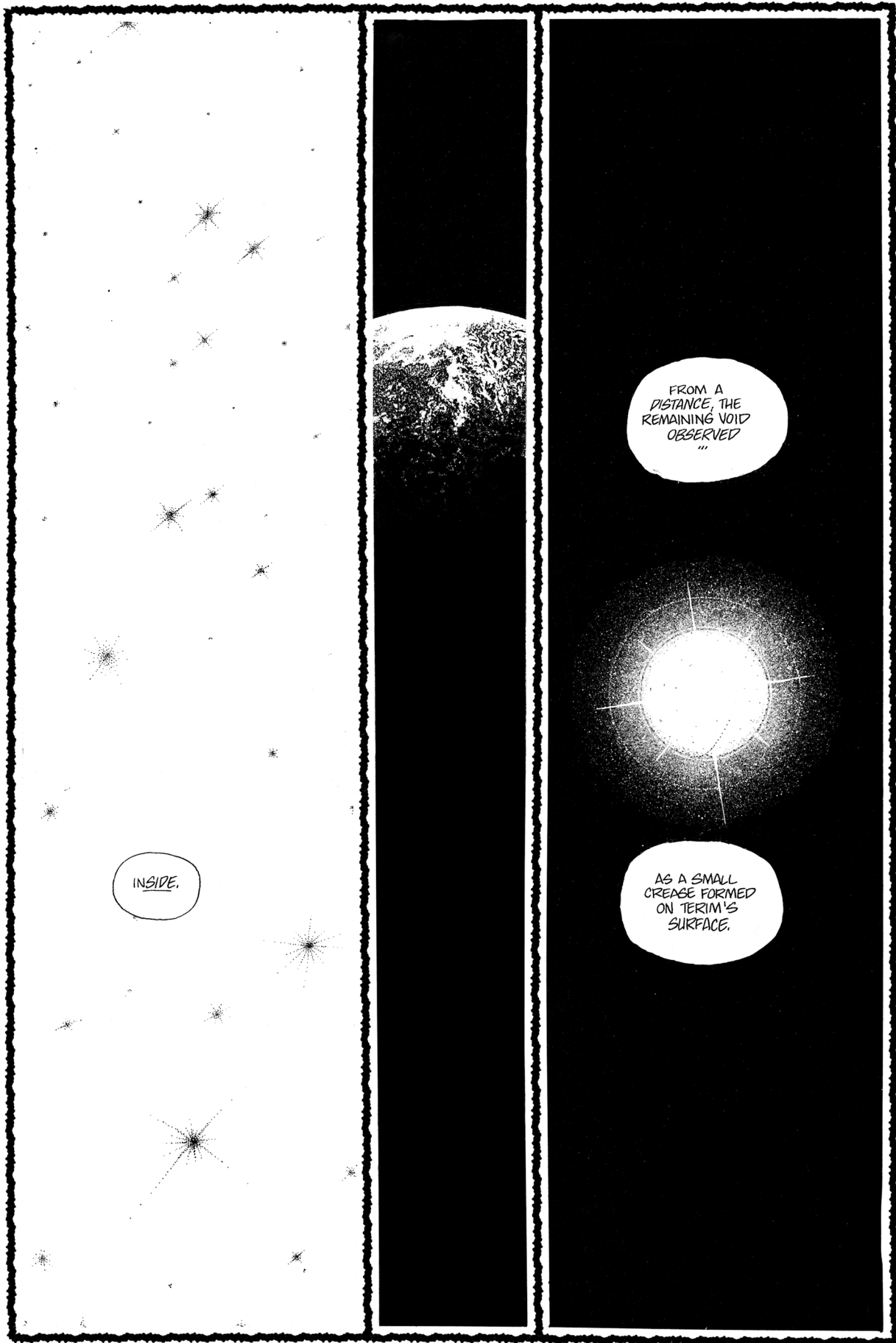
AND
TERIM.

CLOSER...

UNTIL ALL
WAS LIGHT
AND HEAT

NOW.

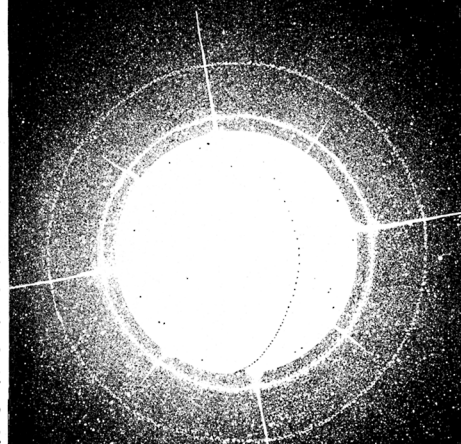
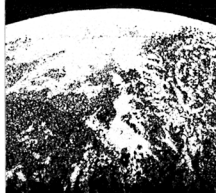
NOW THE
VOID WOULD
FIND OUT
WHAT TERIM
WAS LIKE
...



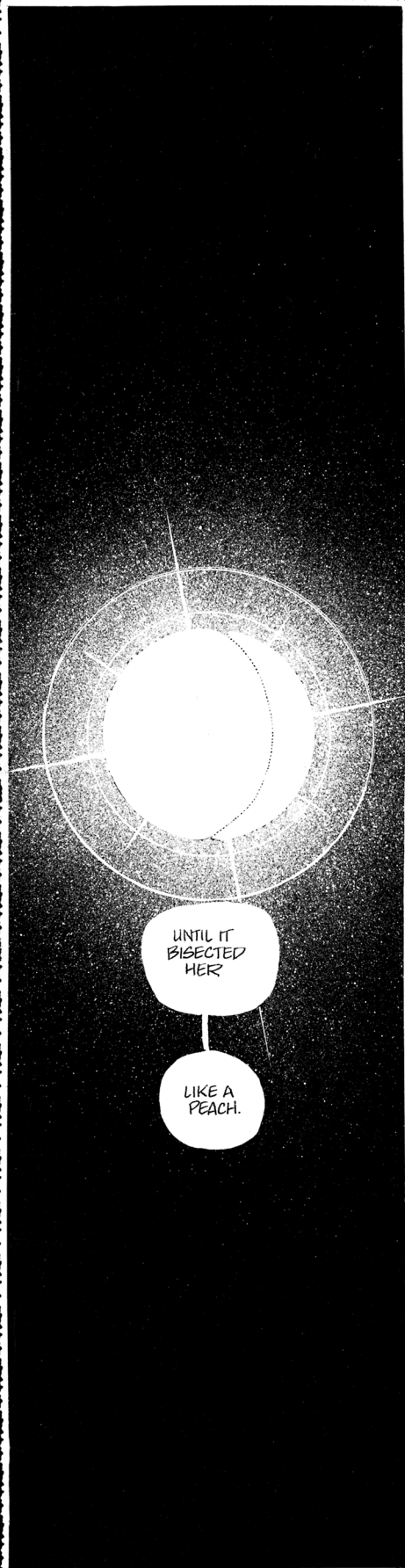
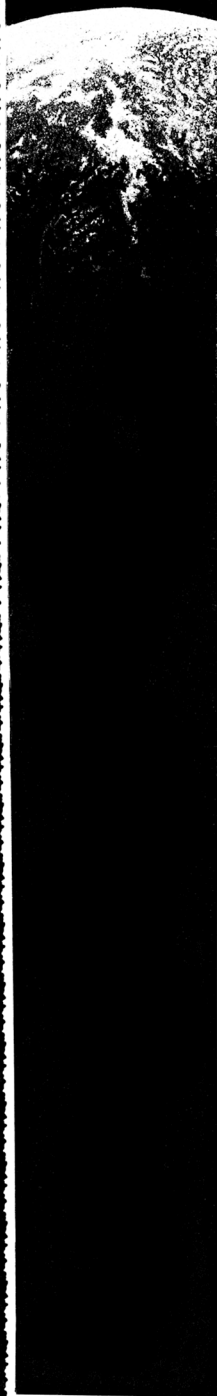
THE BLACK
SPOTS GREW
SMALLER,

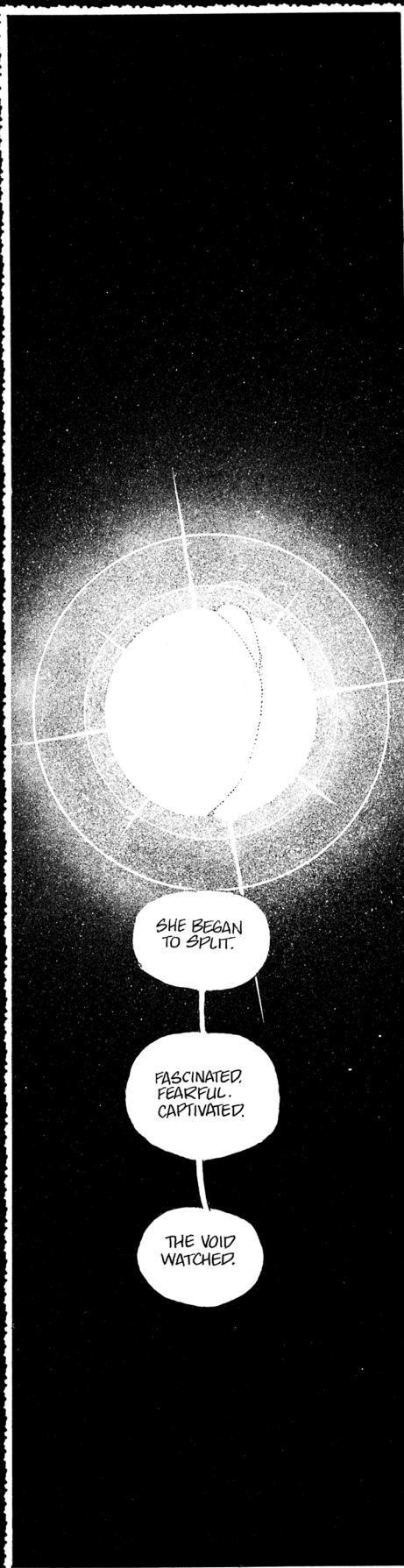
DISAPPEARED
MORE QUICKLY,

REPLACED
THEMSELVES
MORE SLOWLY.



GROWING
LARGER.
DISTINCT.





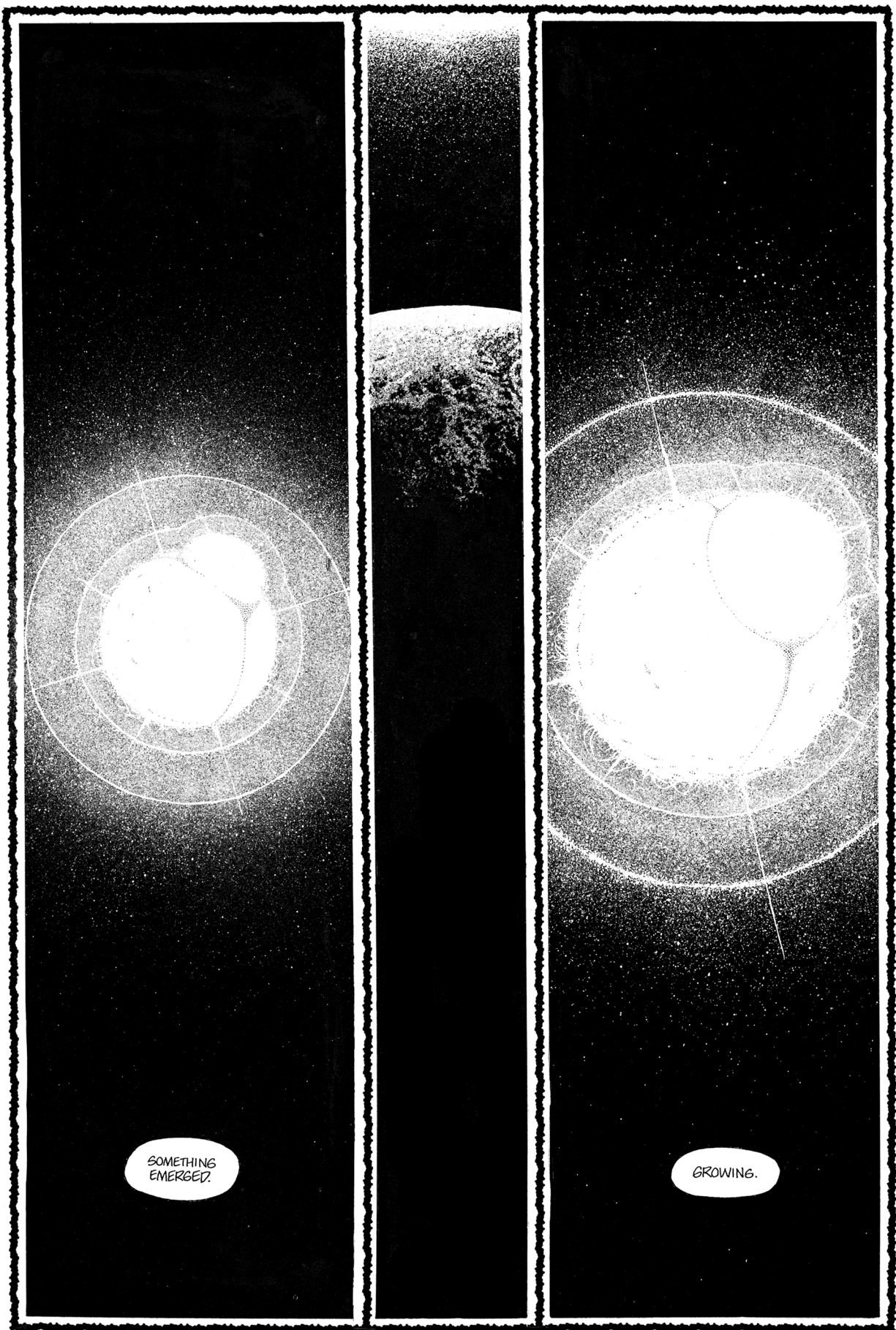
DISORIENTED,
TARIM REALIZED
THAT HE WAS
WITHOUT A
FRAME OF
REFERENCE

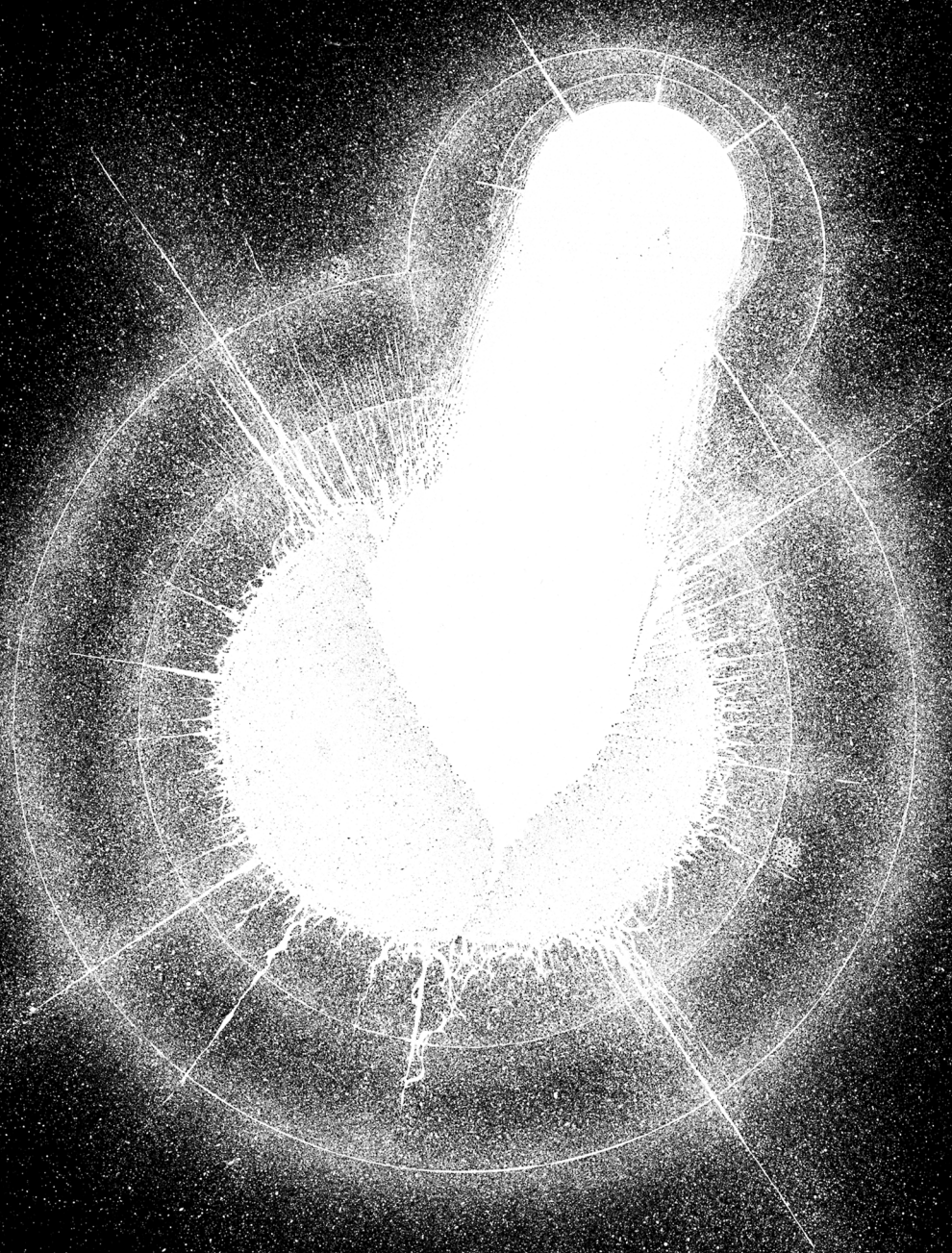
HE-- THE
VOID-- HAD
CEASED
TO EXIST

HE HEARD
A VOICE.

" I FORGIVE
YOU "

" YOU KNOW
NOT WHAT
YOU DO. "





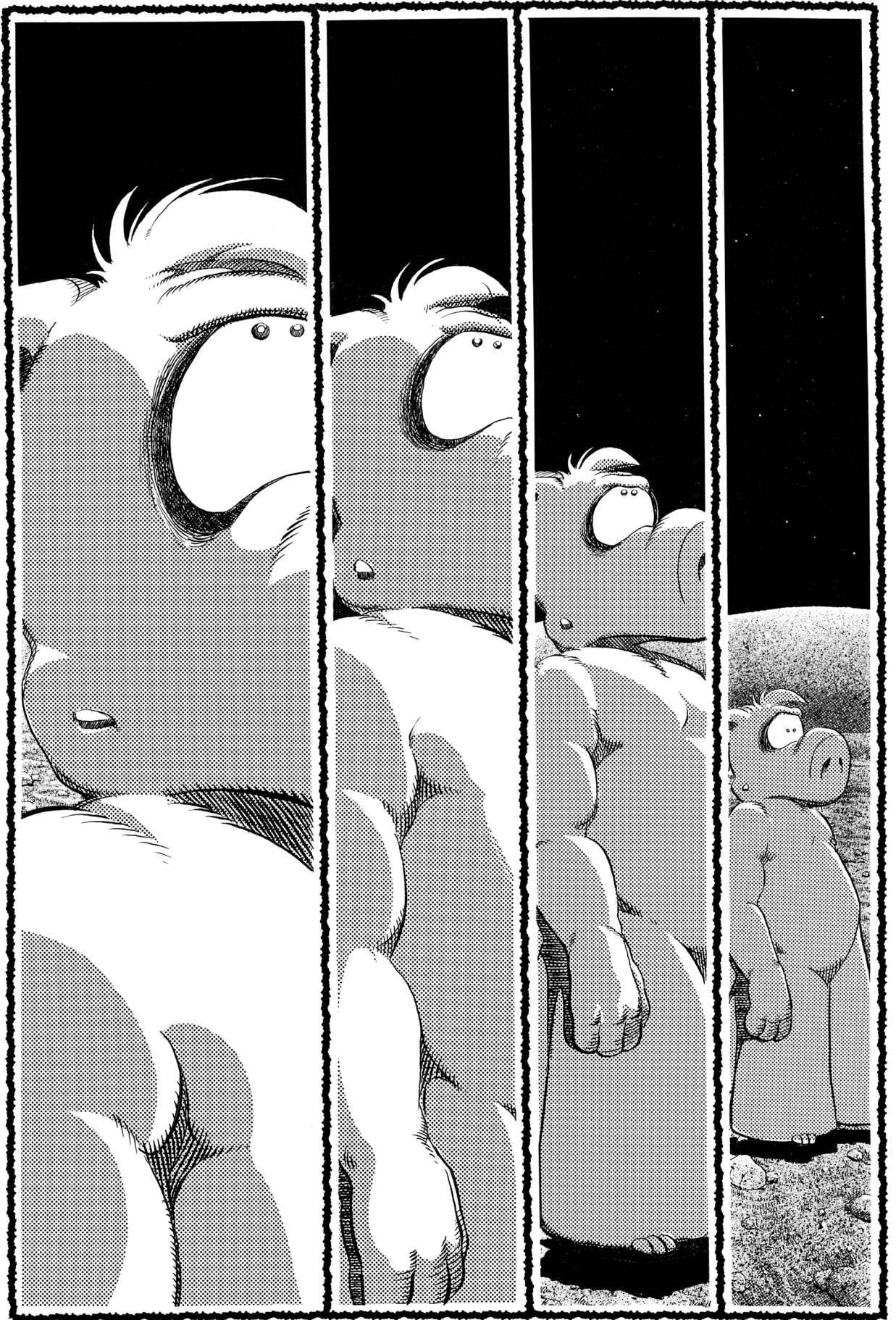
SPLITTING
HER IN
TWO.

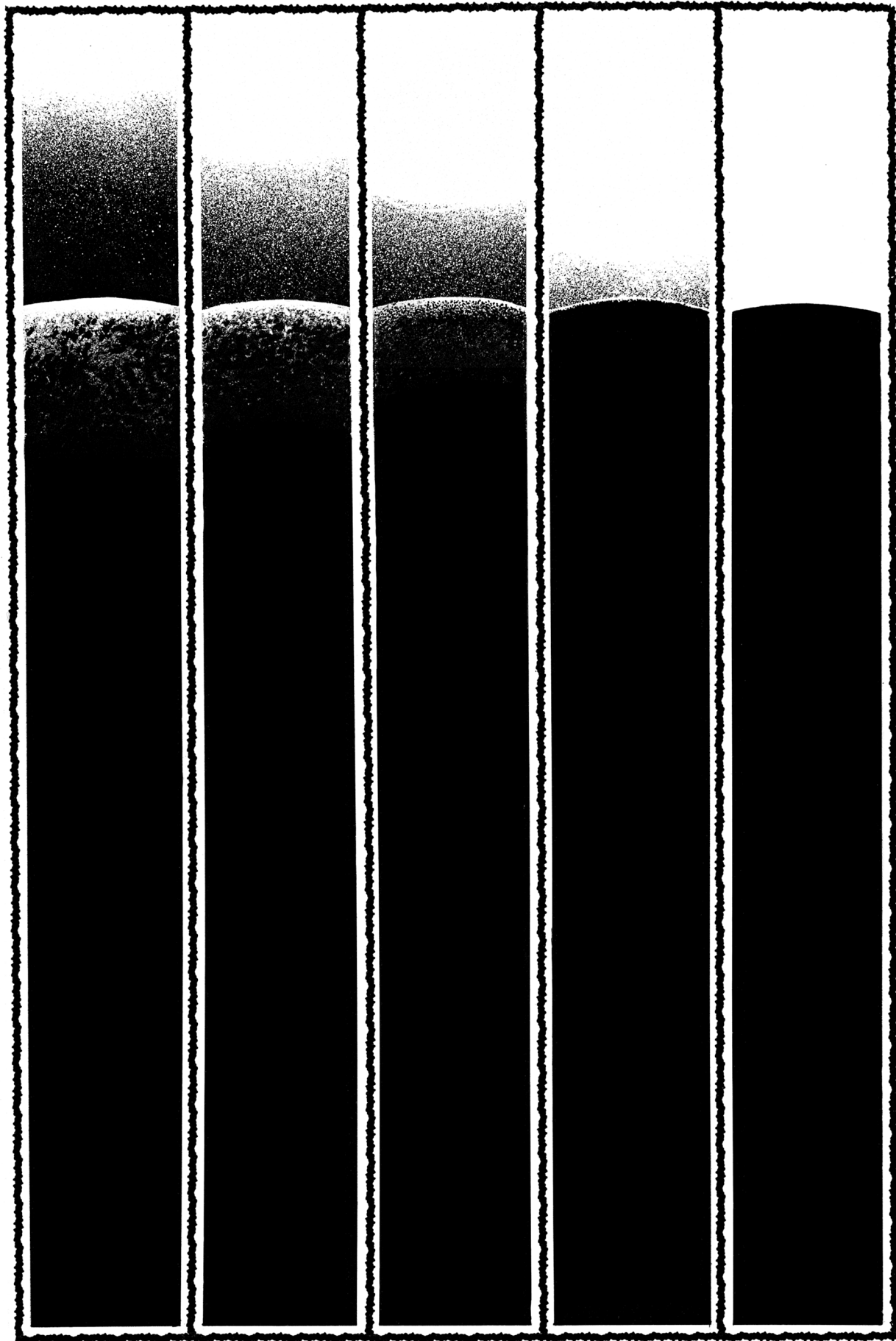
NEXT: she's not a girl who misses much

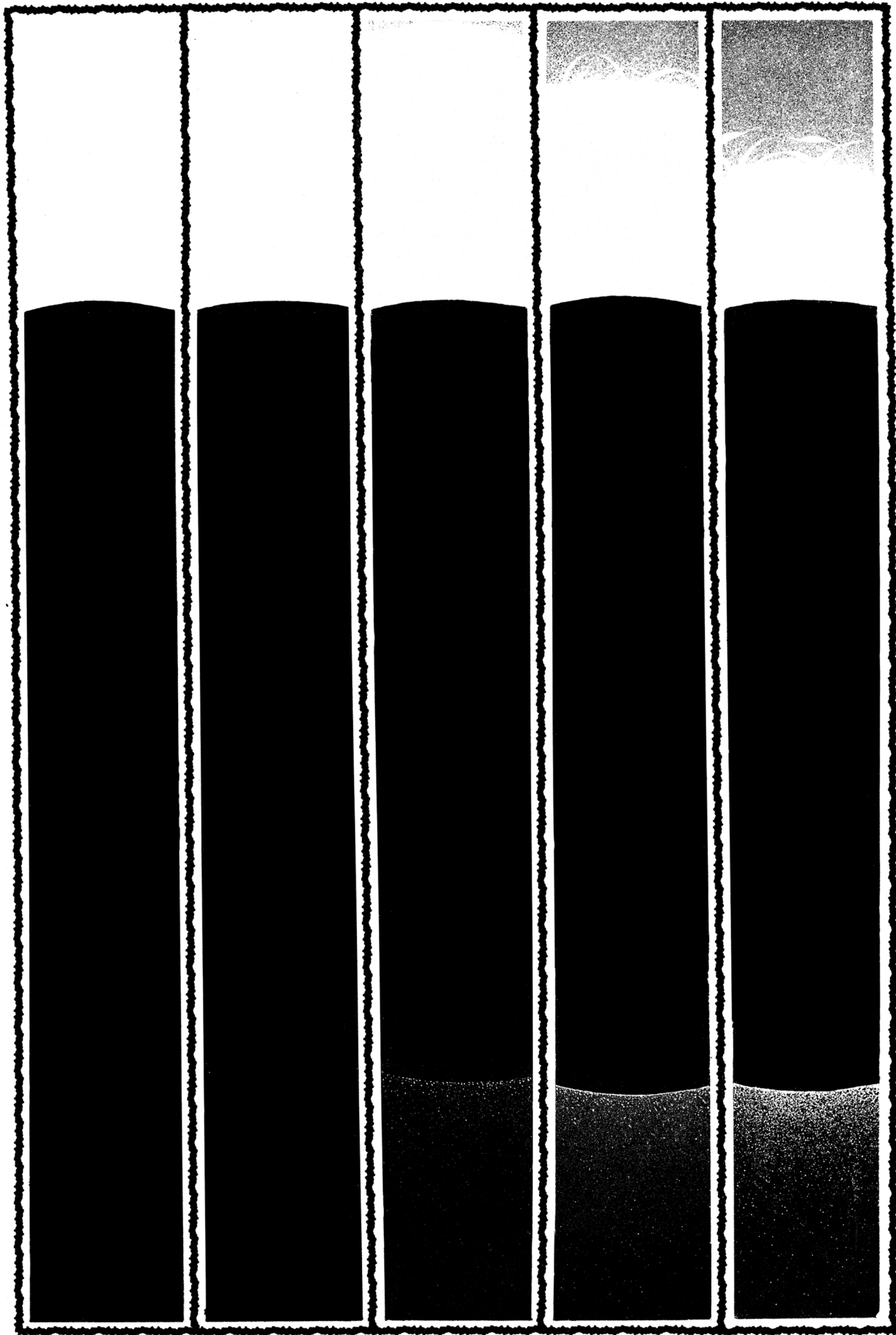
EVERYTHING
WENT WHITE.

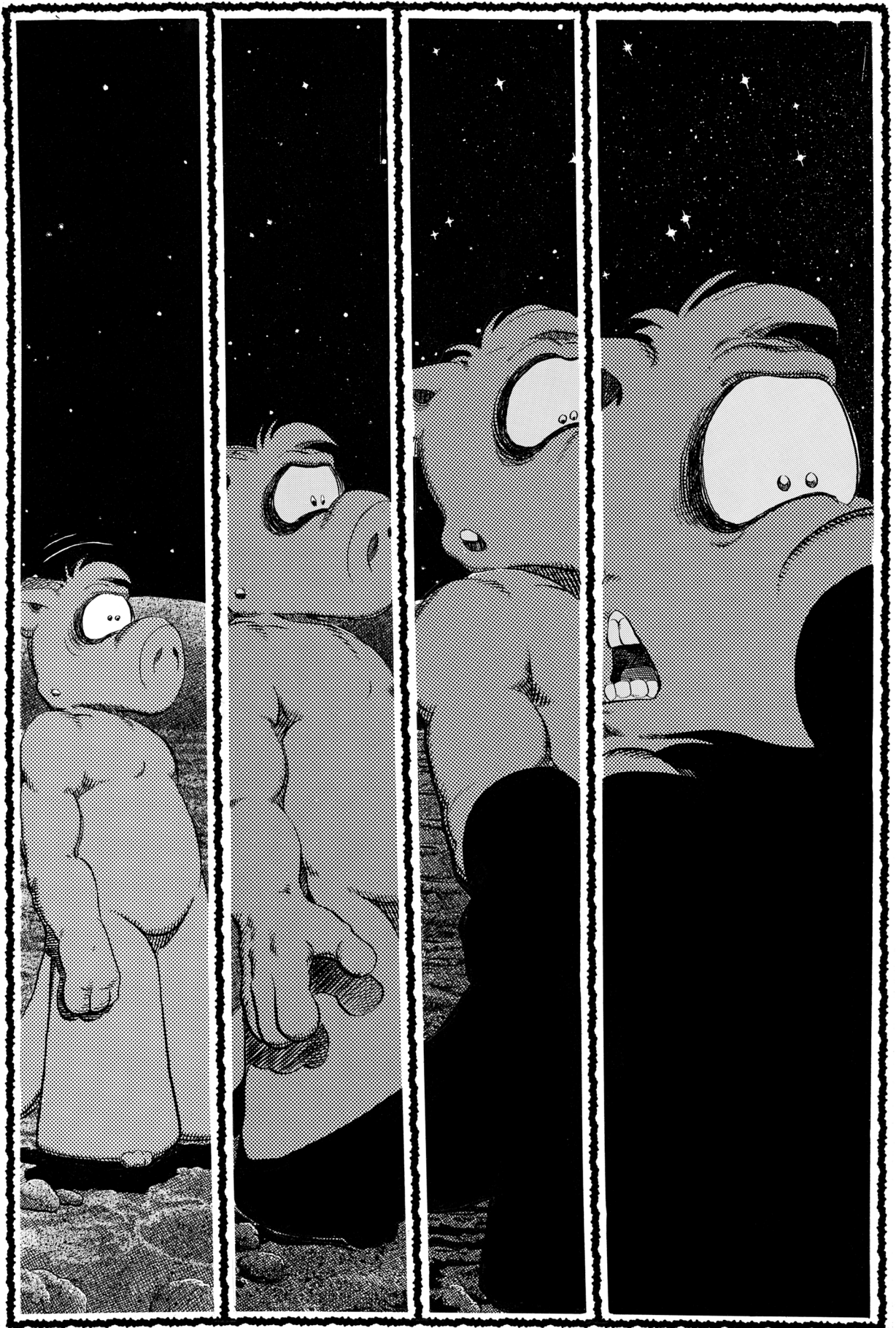
EVERYWHERE.

all
the
suns
are
Daughters

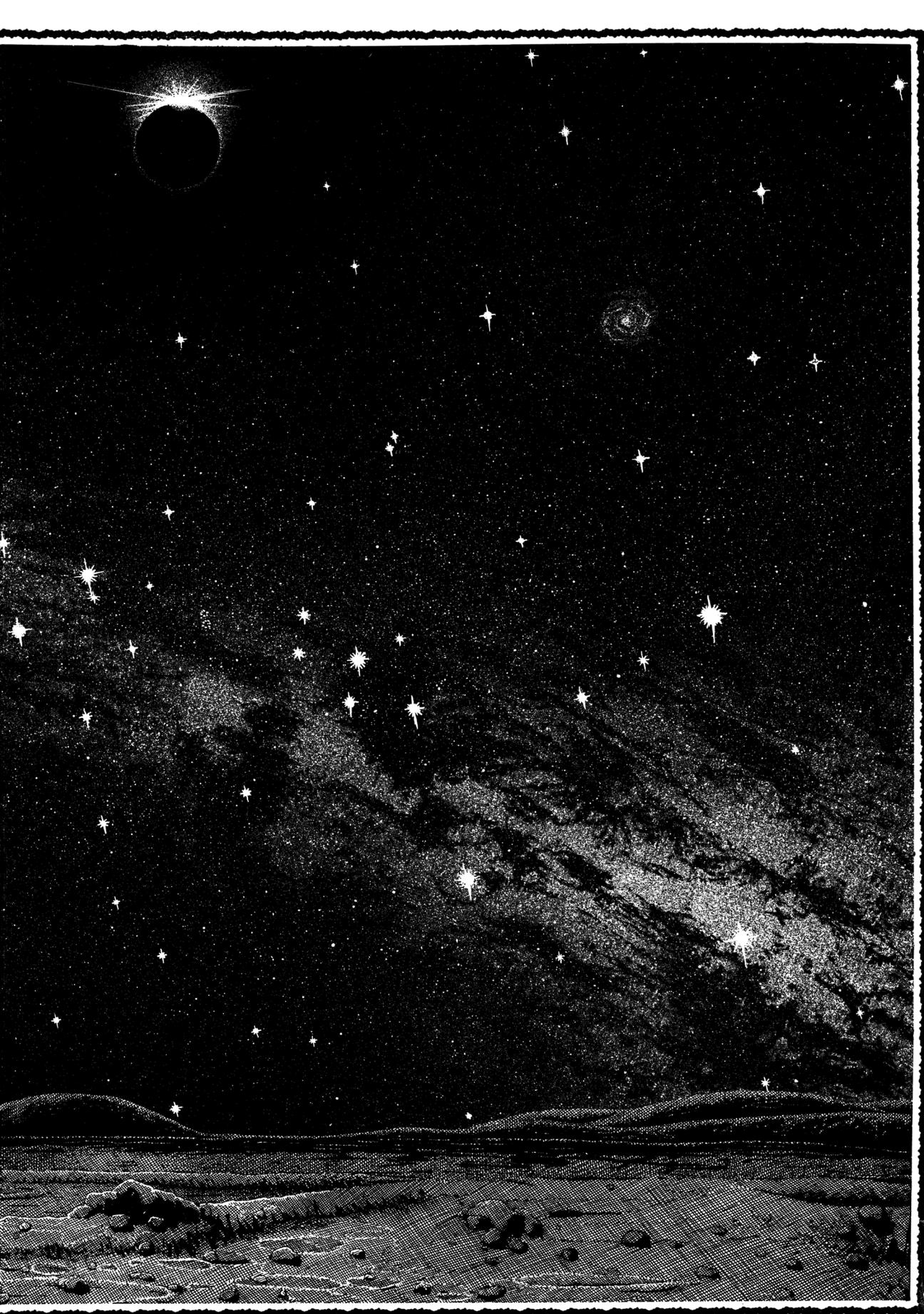


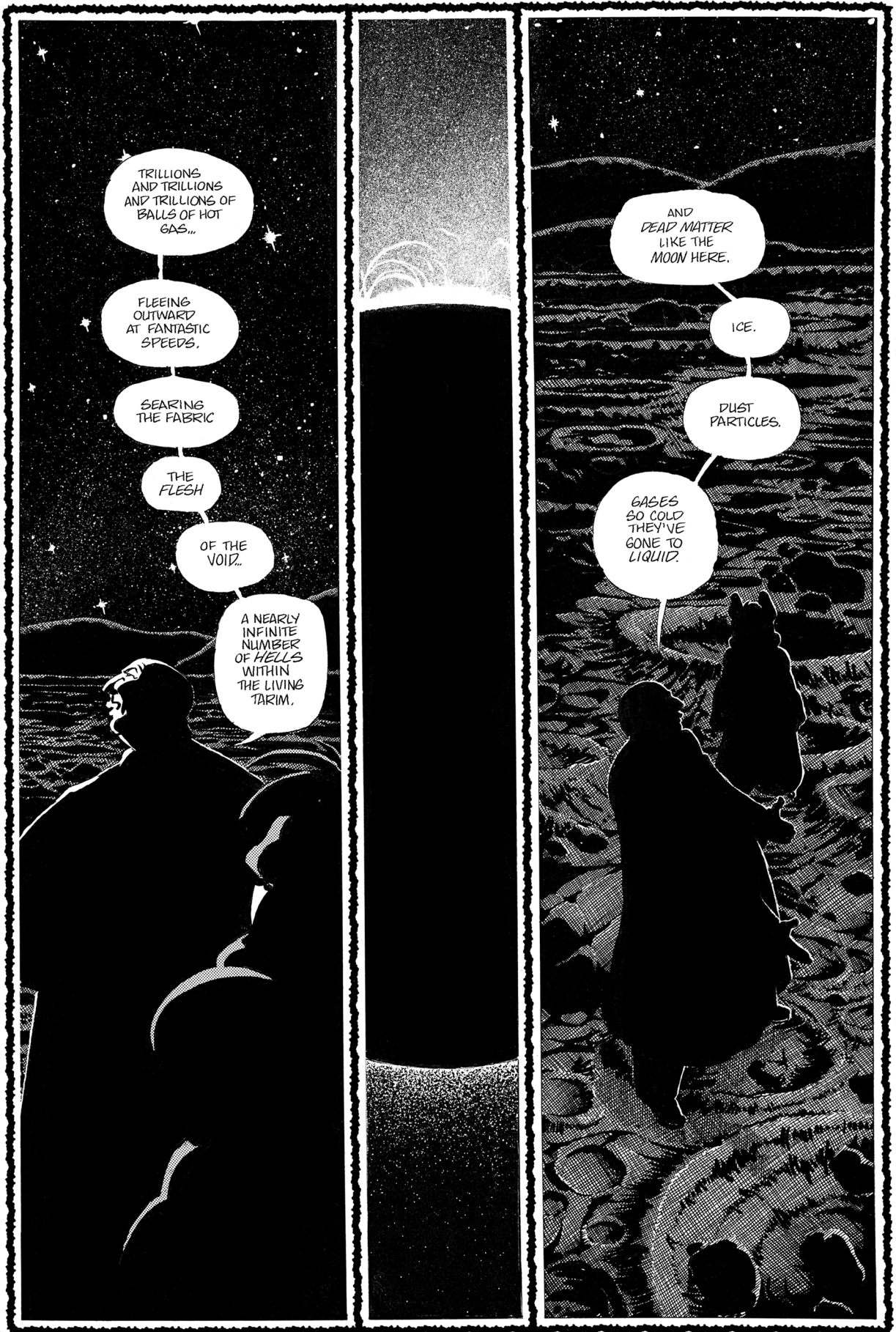












TRILLIONS
AND TRILLIONS
AND TRILLIONS OF
BALLS OF HOT
GAS...

FLEEING
OUTWARD
AT FANTASTIC
SPEEDS,

SEARING
THE FABRIC

THE
FLESH

OF THE
VOID...

A NEARLY
INFINITE
NUMBER
OF HELLS
WITHIN
THE LIVING
TARIM.

AND
DEAD MATTER
LIKE THE
MOON HERE.

ICE.

DUST
PARTICLES.

GASES
SO COLD
THEY'VE
GONE TO
LIQUID.



AND WHAT
DO YOU SUPPOSE
WAS TARIM'S
REACTION?

AS THE
WHITE LIGHT
BEGAN TO
FADE
AND THE
ENORMITY
OF THE WRONG
HE HAD DONE
BECAME
EVIDENT.

REGRET?

ASTONISHMENT
VERGING ON
CATATONIA?

OVERWHELMING
SORROW?

NOT ON
YOUR
SWEET
LIFE.

ANGER!

ANGER
WAS TARIM'S
FIRST REACTION

AND I
QUOTE



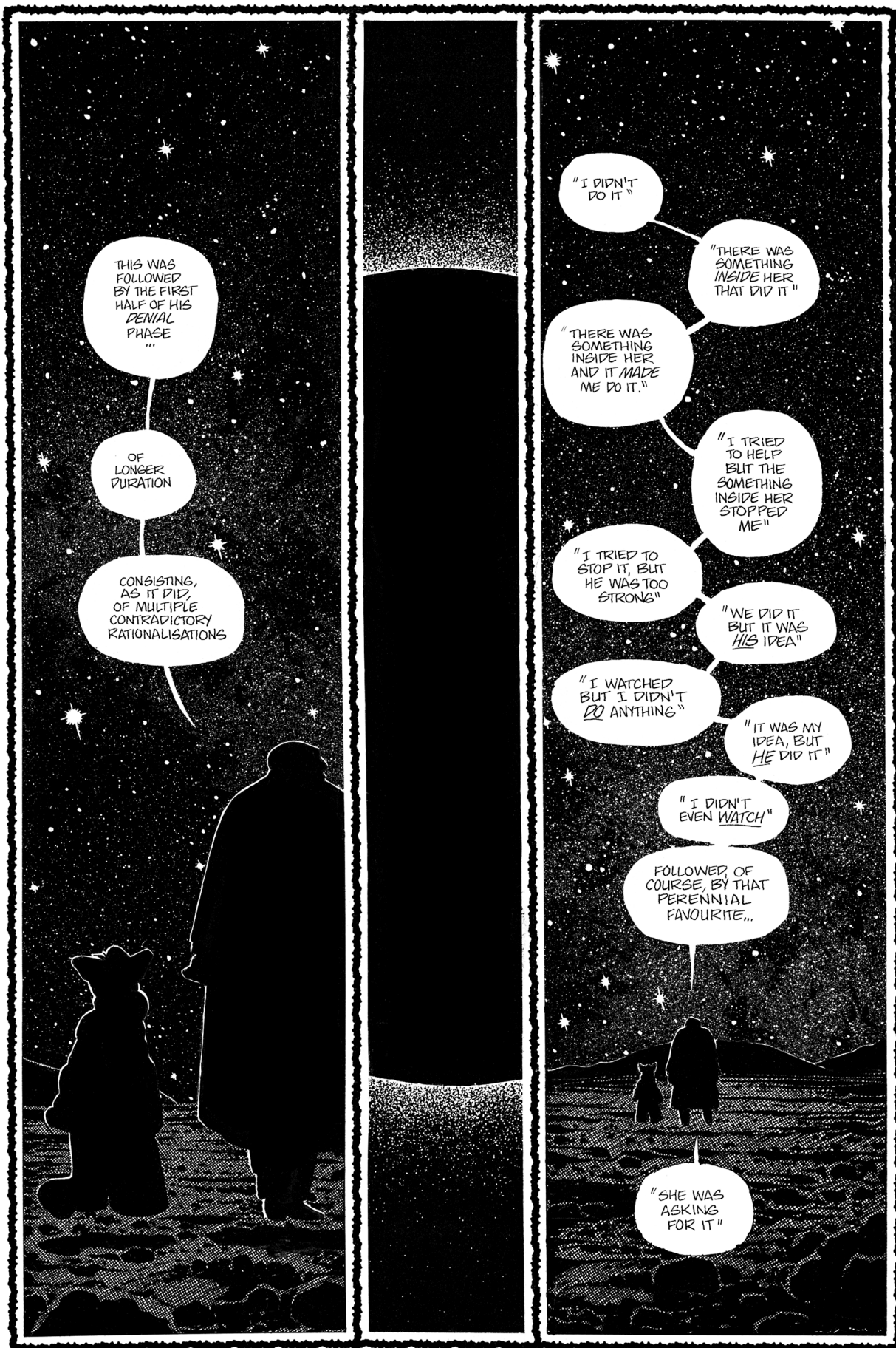
"NICE
GIRLS
DON'T
EXPLODE"

NOT
TO BE
CONFUSED
WITH THE
RELATED
RIDDLE

"WHY DO
YOU WRAP A
HAMSTER IN
ELECTRICIAN'S
TAPE?"
WHICH--

MORE IN
DEFERENCE
TO MY OWN
SENSIBILITIES
THAN TO
YOURS,

I'LL
LEAVE
UNANSWERED.



THIS WAS
FOLLOWED
BY THE FIRST
HALF OF HIS
DENIAL
PHASE
...

OF
LONGER
DURATION

CONSISTING,
AS IT DID,
OF MULTIPLE
CONTRADICTIONARY
RATIONALISATIONS

"I DIDN'T
DO IT"

"THERE WAS
SOMETHING
INSIDE HER
THAT DID IT"

"THERE WAS
SOMETHING
INSIDE HER
AND IT MADE
ME DO IT."

"I TRIED
TO HELP
BUT THE
SOMETHING
INSIDE HER
STOPPED
ME"

"I TRIED TO
STOP IT, BUT
HE WAS TOO
STRONG"

"WE DID IT
BUT IT WAS
HIS IDEA"


"I WATCHED
BUT I DIDN'T
DO ANYTHING"

"IT WAS MY
IDEA, BUT
HE DID IT"

"I DIDN'T
EVEN WATCH"

FOLLOWED, OF
COURSE, BY THAT
PERENNIAL
FAVOURITE...

"SHE WAS
ASKING
FOR IT"



THAT
WAS WHEN
HE ENTERED
THE *SECOND*
HALF OF HIS
DENIAL
PHASE

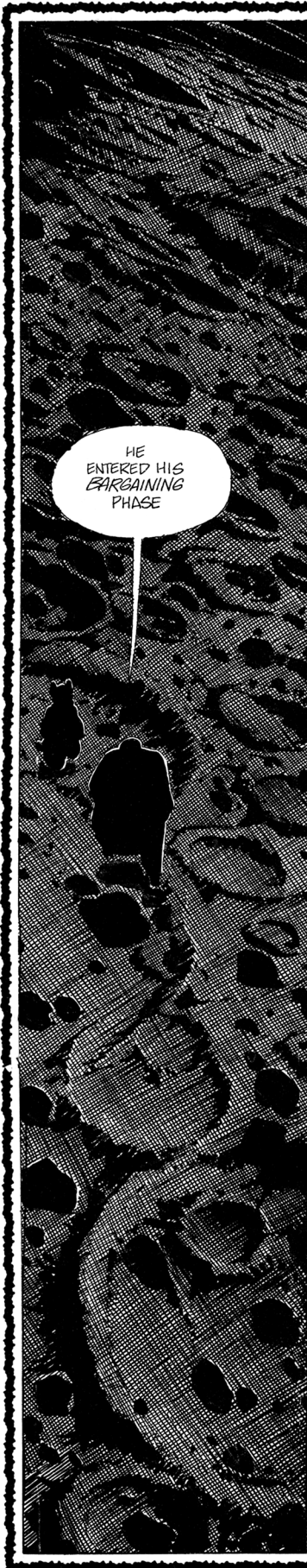
CONFRONTED
WITH THE
EVIDENCE
OF A BILLION
TRILLION TINY
TERIMS

HE BEGAN
CRUSHING
THEM, ONE
BY ONE

THIS
WAS HIS
"WHAT
STARS?"
PHASE

REALIZING JUST
HOW FORMIDABLE
A TASK THE CRUSHING
OF A BILLION TRILLION
STARS WAS

EVEN FOR
SOMEONE AS
LARGE AND
INDUSTRIOUS AS
THE VOID...





GRADUALLY, HE
STOPPED ON
HIS OWN,
OF COURSE

IN NO TIME AT
ALL -- THERE WAS
SILENCE AGAIN,
EVERYWHERE.

EXCEPT FOR THE
RUMBLING
AND INFINITE
ECHO OF THE
"BIG BANG".

AND THE SOUND
OF THE OCCASIONAL
STAR EXPLODING--

ALMOST
ABSENT-
MINDEPLY

THAT WAS
THE BEGINNING
OF HIS DEPRESSION
PHASE.



"EVEN IF YOU
DO PULL
YOURSELF
TOGETHER "

" WHAT WITH
ALL THESE DEAD ROCKS
AND HOT GASES AND
DIRTY ICE AND
DUST PARTICLES "

"YOU'RE
GOING TO
BE A
MESS "

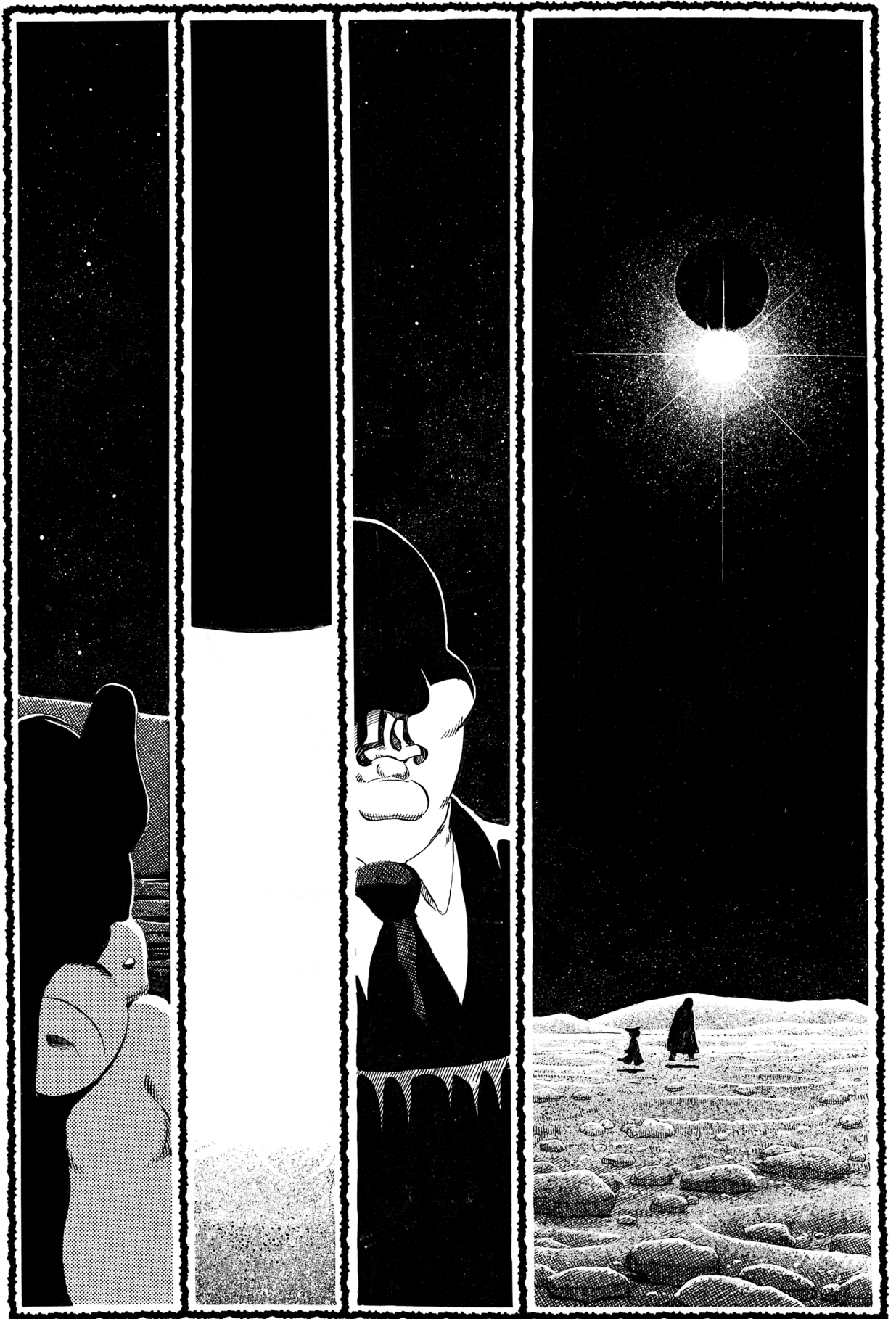
FINALLY...

...INEVITABLY.

ACCEPTANCE.

"SHE'S
DEAD."

"AND SHE'S NEVER
COMING BACK"



WHICH HE
BELIEVES

UNTIL A LITTLE
LESS THAN SIX
THOUSAND YEARS
FROM NOW, WHEN
THE SAME BRIGHT
FELLOWS WHO FIGURED
OUT THE "BIG BANG"
MAKE TWO MORE
DISCOVERIES...

FIRST, THAT
ALTHOUGH FILLED
WITH SUPERHEATED
GASES...

THE UNIVERSE
IS COOLING.

AND
SECOND

ALTHOUGH
EXPANDING

THE
UNIVERSE'S
EXPANSION
IS SLOWING

IN
SHORT

SHE'S
COMING
BACK.



OR AS ONE
OF MY FAVOURITE
AUTHORS

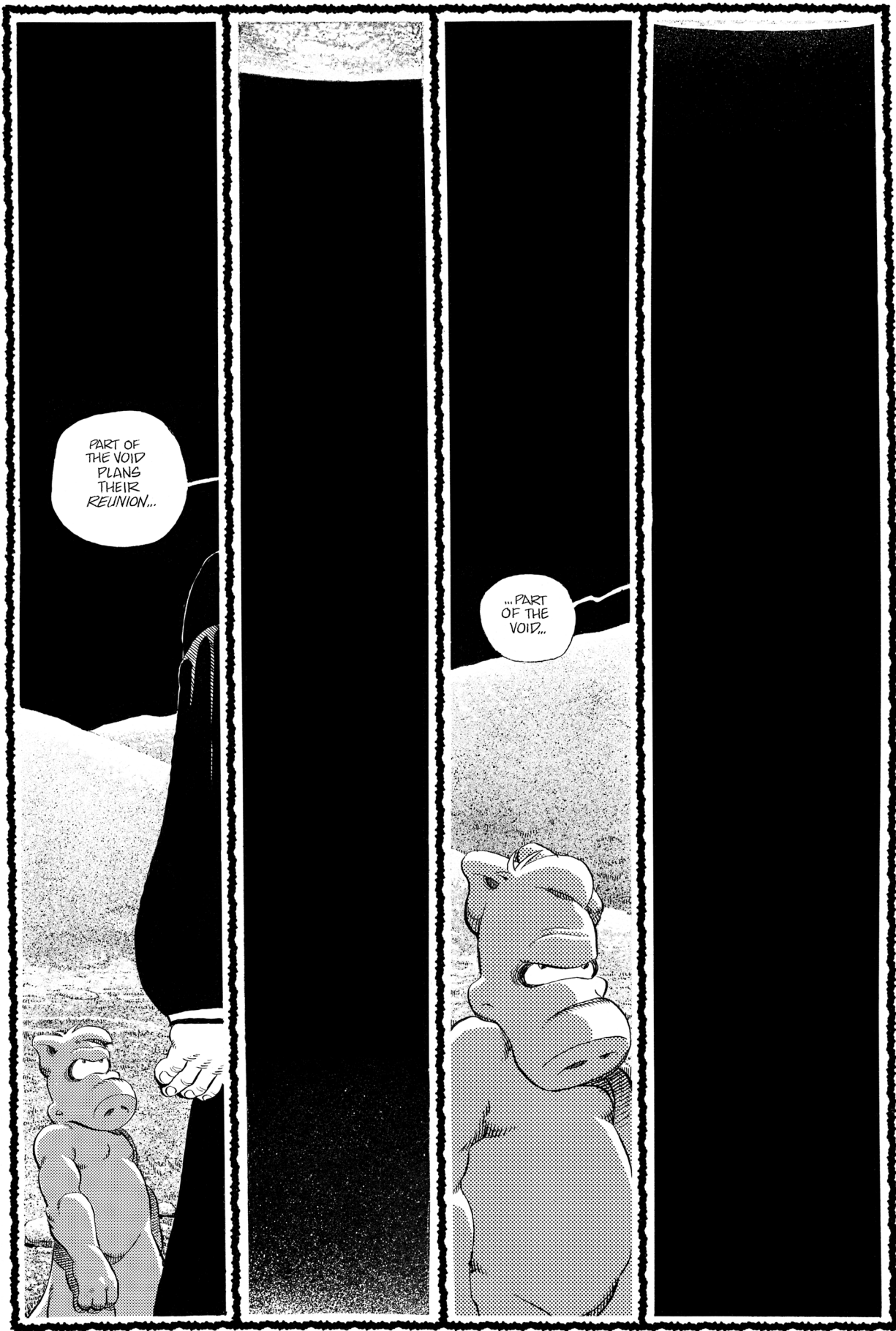
...
BELIEVE ME,
I'VE READ THEM
ALL
...

WILL
WRITE A LITTLE
LESS THAN SIX
THOUSAND YEARS
FROM NOW...

"AND HIS SHADOW ON THE BORDER OF THE POND WAS WATCHING FOR A FEW MOMENTS, THEN HE STOOPED AND GROPED ON THE GROUND. THEN AGAIN THERE WAS A BURST OF SOUND, AND A BURST OF BRILLIANT LIGHT, THE MOON HAD EXPLODED ON THE WATER, AND WAS FLYING ASUNDER IN FLAKES OF WHITE AND DANGEROUS FIRE. RAPIDLY, LIKE WHITE BIRDS, THE FIRES ALL BROKEN ROSE ACROSS THE POND, FLEEING IN CLAMOROUS CONFUSION, BATTLING WITH THE FLOCK OF DARK WAVES THAT WERE FORCING THEIR WAY IN...

"...BUT AT THE CENTRE, THE HEART OF ALL, WAS STILL A VIVID, INCANDESCENT QUIVERING OF A WHITE MOON NOT QUITE DESTROYED, A WHITE BODY OF FIRE WRITHING AND STRIVING AND NOT EVEN NOW BROKEN OPEN, NOT YET VIOLATED. IT SEEMED TO BE DRAWING ITSELF TOGETHER WITH STRANGE, VIOLENT PANGS, IN BLIND EFFORT. IT WAS GETTING STRONGER, IT WAS RE-ASSERTING ITSELF THE INVIOLEABLE MOON. AND THE RAYS WERE HASTENING IN IN THIN LINES OF LIGHT, TO RETURN TO THE STRENGTHENED MOON, THAT SHOOK UPON THE WATER IN TRIUMPHANT REASSUMPTION."





PART OF
THE VOID
PLANS
THEIR
REUNION...

...PART
OF THE
VOID...

...
PLOTS
HIS
REVENGE

NEXT: BEING HERE

EVERY EIGHT
OR TEN YEARS
OR SO, A ROCK
THE SIZE OF A
GRAPEFRUIT...

I SAW ONE THE SIZE
OF A WATERMELON
ONCE, BUT THAT WAS
THOUSANDS OF YEARS
AGO...

IMPACTS ON THE MOON'S
SURFACE SO THAT A
PERFECTLY CIRCULAR WAVE
OF DUST PARTICLES RISES
EVER-SO-SLOWLY, TAKING
A FULL FIVE SECONDS
TO SETTLE BACK INTO
A RADIANT PATTERN
OUTWARD FROM
ITS CRATER OF
ORIGIN.

I
USUALLY
GO.

IT'S
WORTH
THE TRIP.

THE MAJOR CRATERS
VISIBLE FROM THE
EARTH ARE A FAR
RARER OCCURENCE

NOT ONE
HAS BEEN FORMED
IN THE LAST NINE
HUNDRED MILLION
YEARS,

BASE TRANQUILLITY

EACH CURVE.
EACH SLOPE.

GENTLE.
SOOTHING.

LIKE THE
WOMANLY FORMS
OF THE BEST
CLASSIC SCULPTURES.

THERE ARE NO
LOOMING CLIFFS,
NO SHARPENED
PROMINENCES...

ONLY THE SUBTLE
ROLL AND INCLINE
OF HER FORM...

MARRD
BY SMALL
VIOLENCE.

ADRIPT
IN THE
UNFORGIVING
VOID.

FOR NINE HUNDRED
MILLION YEARS, THIS
CORPSE OF TERIM HAS
LAIN, UNDISTURBED, BUT
FOR A GRAPEFRUIT-
SIZED REMINDER
OF THE "BIG BANG"
EVERY DECADE OR
SO...

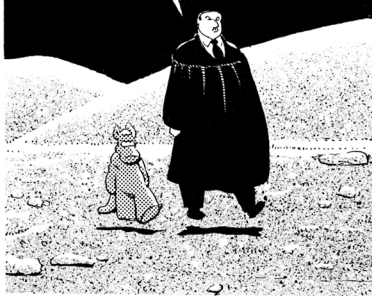
EACH INCH OF
HER SURFACE
I KNOW BY
HEART.

UNTIL A LITTLE LESS
THAN SIX THOUSAND
YEARS FROM NOW
WHEN TWO COUNTRIES...

BOTH IN THE FULL
FLOWERING OF MALE-
DOMINATED CIVILISATION
AT THE APEX OF ITS
DOMINATION...

FIRST ONE
AND THEN THE OTHER

PENETRATE
INTO HER
CORPSE WITH
METAL BUNDLES



AND...

IN
THE SPACE
OF FIVE
YEARS

...SIX
MORE.



THE EIGHTH ONE
FINALLY WORKS.

AND SENDS BACK
VOLUMES AND
VOLUMES OF
INFORMATION
INDICATING...

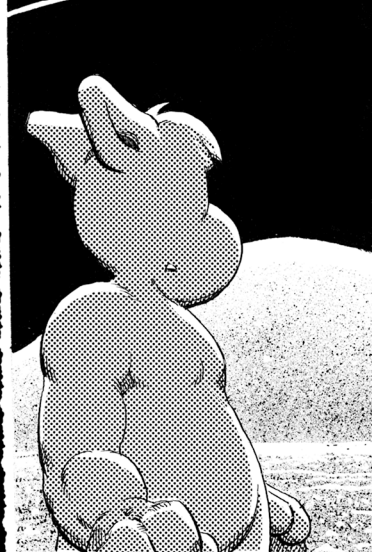
BEYOND A
SHADOW
OF A
DOUBT

...THAT THE MOON
IS COMPOSED
OF DEAD ROCK.

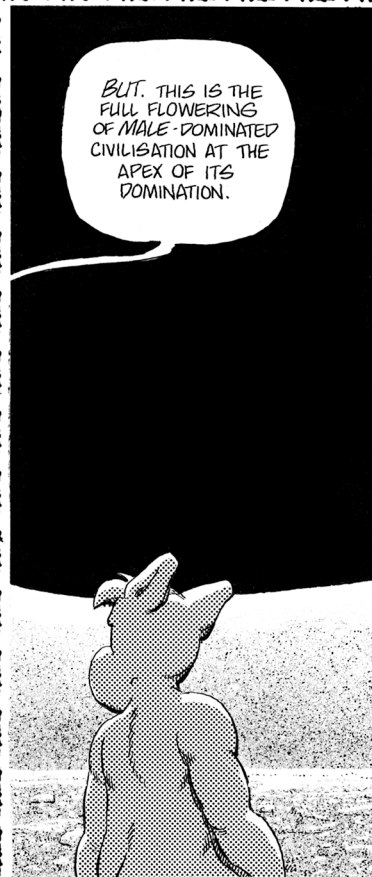


FOR MOST
PEOPLE, THAT
WOULD BE
ENOUGH...

AND THEY WOULD
LEAVE HER
REST IN PEACE.

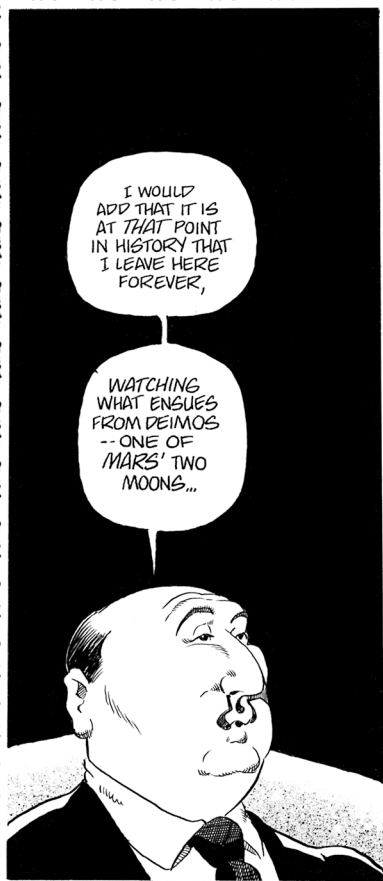


BUT, THIS IS THE
FULL FLOWERING
OF MALE-DOMINATED
CIVILISATION AT THE
APEX OF ITS
DOMINATION.



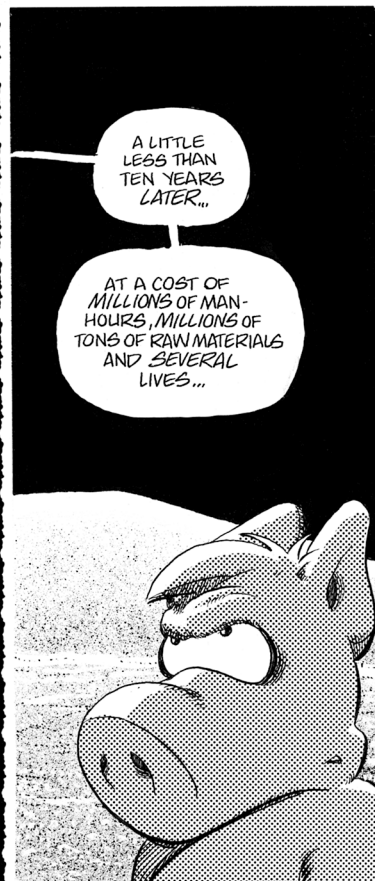
SO THE
GHOULISHNESS
CONTINUES.





I WOULD
ADD THAT IT IS
AT THAT POINT
IN HISTORY THAT
I LEAVE HERE
FOREVER,

WATCHING
WHAT ENSUES
FROM DEIMOS
-- ONE OF
MARS' TWO
MOONS...



A LITTLE
LESS THAN
TEN YEARS
LATER...

AT A COST OF
MILLIONS OF MAN-
HOURS, MILLIONS OF
TONS OF RAW MATERIALS
AND SEVERAL
LIVES...



A VEHICLE
IS MADE THAT WILL
CARRY MAN TO
THE MOON

AND RETURN
HIM SAFELY
TO EARTH.



SIX THOUSAND
YEARS FROM TODAY
IT LANDS HERE.
ON THIS
SPOT.



TWO
MEN
GET
OUT.



THE FIRST MAN WILL
HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED
TO IMMEDIATELY SCRAPE
UP A SAMPLE OF HER
DEAD FLESH, IN
CASE...

...
BELIEVE
IT OR
NOT...



IN CASE HE HAS
TO MAKE AN
EMERGENCY
RETURN TO HIS
CRAFT.



AS IF SOMETHING
THAT HAS BEEN
DEAD FOR BILLIONS
OF YEARS WAS IN
SOME WAY A
PHYSICAL
THREAT.



THE SECOND
MAN DESCRIBES HER
REMAINS AS A
"MAGNIFICENT
DESOLATION"

WHICH WOULD BE
ALMOST POETIC IF
HE WASN'T LEAVING
FOOTPRINTS ALL
OVER HER



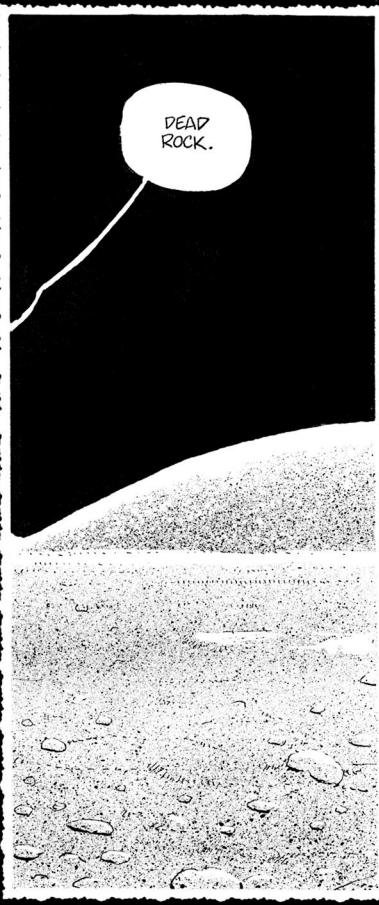
WHEN THEY RETURN
THEY WILL BE ISOLATED
AND GIVEN EVERY
MEDICAL TEST
IMAGINABLE

AS IF THEY COULD
CATCH A DISEASE
FROM SOMETHING THAT
HAS BEEN DEAD FOR
BILLIONS AND BILLIONS
OF YEARS



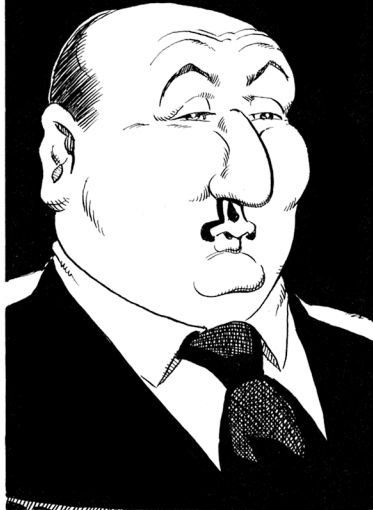
THE SAMPLES THEY
WILL BRING BACK
WITH THEM ARE
EXAMINED MINUTELY
AND DETERMINED
TO BE...

TO
NO ONE'S
GREAT
SURPRISE



DEAD
ROCK.

FOR MOST
PEOPLE THAT WOULD
BE ENOUGH AND
THEY WOULD LEAVE
HER TO REST IN
PEACE.



BUT THIS IS
THE FULL FLOWERING
OF MALE-DOMINATED
CIVILISATION AT ITS
APEX.



SO ANOTHER
EXPEDITION
IS READIED.

THAT ONE PICKS
UP SOME OF THE
JUNK FROM TEN
YEARS BEFORE
AND...

IN THE
NAME OF
PROGRESS



...LEAVES MUCH
LARGER PIECES
OF JUNK
BEHIND.

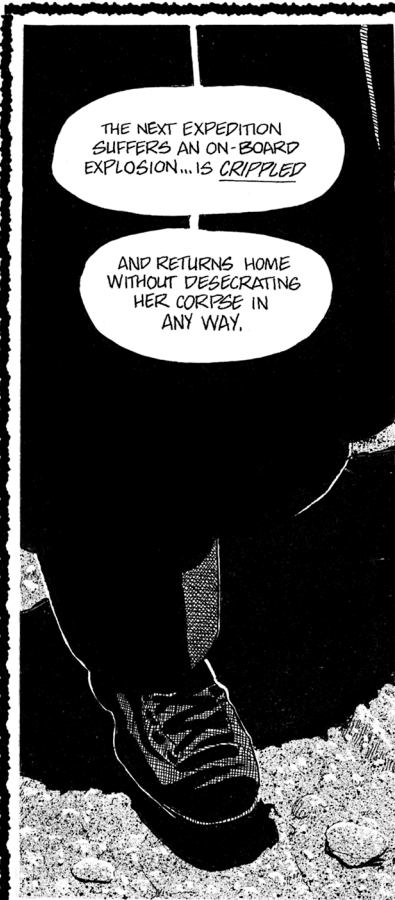


THE SAMPLES
THEY BRING BACK
PROVE REMARKABLY
SIMILAR TO THE
SAMPLES OBTAINED
BY THE FIRST
BUNCH.



MORE
DEAD
ROCK.





THE NEXT EXPEDITION
SUFFERS AN ON-BOARD
EXPLOSION... IS CRIPPLED

AND RETURNS HOME
WITHOUT DESECRATING
HER CORPSE IN
ANY WAY,



THE EXPLOSION IS
CAUSED BY A SWITCH
IN THE MAIN POWER
SOURCE WHICH HAS
BEEN WELDED
SHUT

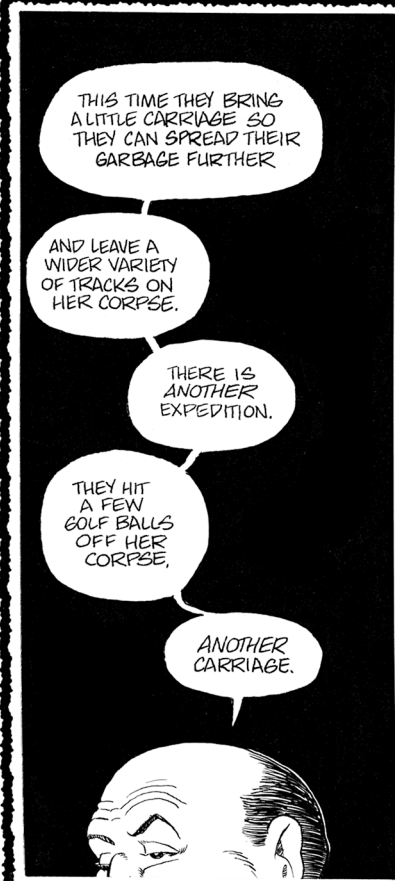
INSTEAD OF
BEING LEFT
FREE.



FOR MOST PEOPLE, THERE
WOULD BE A MESSAGE
IN THIS.

BUT THIS IS THE FULL
FLOWERING OF MALE-
DOMINATED CIVILISATION
AT ITS APEX.

SO THERE IS
ANOTHER
EXPEDITION.



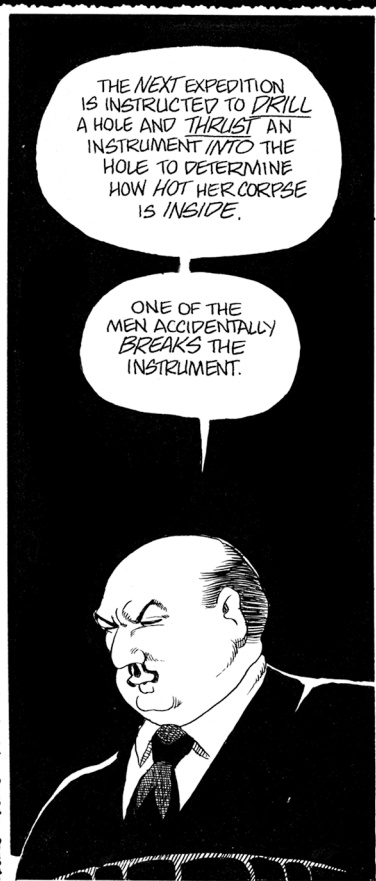
THIS TIME THEY BRING
A LITTLE CARRIAGE SO
THEY CAN SPREAD THEIR
GARBAGE FURTHER

AND LEAVE A
WIDER VARIETY
OF TRACKS ON
HER CORPSE.

THERE IS
ANOTHER
EXPEDITION.

THEY HIT
A FEW
GOLF BALLS
OFF HER
CORPSE,

ANOTHER
CARRIAGE.



THE NEXT EXPEDITION
IS INSTRUCTED TO DRILL
A HOLE AND THRUST AN
INSTRUMENT INTO THE
HOLE TO DETERMINE
HOW HOT HER CORPSE
IS INSIDE.

ONE OF THE
MEN ACCIDENTALLY
BREAKS THE
INSTRUMENT.



FOR MOST PEOPLE
THERE WOULD BE
A MESSAGE IN
THIS.

THE NEXT
EXPEDITION

THEIR
LAST
ONE

BRINGS AN UNBREAKABLE
REPLACEMENT, THEY
DRILL. THEY THRUST.
THEY FIND OUT HER
CORPSE IS FIFTEEN
HUNDRED DEGREES
AT ITS CORE.

THEY ARE
VERY PLEASED
WITH THEMSELVES

SHE EXTRUDES
A FEW ORANGE
BEADS FROM THE
DUST ON HER SURFACE
...WHICH ONE OF
THE MEN FINDS.

THERE IS NO
RATIONAL
EXPLANATION
FOR THEIR
EXISTENCE.

AS A RESULT,
THEY ARE
QUICKLY
FORGOTTEN.

AND ALL
EXPEDITIONS TO
THE MOON ARE
SUSPENDED, EVEN
THOUGH FOUR MORE
HAD BEEN PLANNED

TEN YEARS
LATER, THIS
COUNTRY,

THE ORIGINAL
ADVOCATES OF
THE PEACEFUL
COLONISATION
OF SPACE,

DECIDE TO BUILD
GIANT SPACE WEAPONS

STRICTLY
FOR DEFENSE
OF COURSE.

ONE OF THEIR
SPACE FLIGHTS
BLOWS UP,
KILLING--
AMONG
OTHERS--

A
FEMALE
TEACHER.

THEIR SPACE WEAPON
SHIELD PROVES TO BE
IMPRACTICAL, AND SO
THEY CHANGE THE
FOCUS OF THEIR
RESEARCH...

DEVELOPING A
WEAPON CAPABLE
OF CAUSING LARGE
DISTURBANCES IN THE
HEART OF THE SUN...

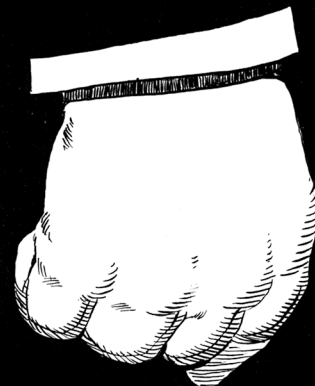
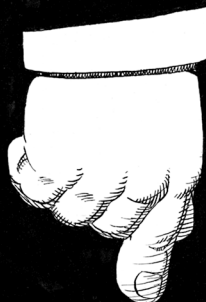
DISTURBANCES
LARGE ENOUGH
TO WIPE OUT THE
PLANETS CLOSEST
TO HER.



THEY HOLD THE WORLD
HOSTAGE TO THEIR
THREAT TO REDUCE
THE EARTH TO A
CINDER

A CONFLICT
ISN'T SETTLED
TO THEIR
SATISFACTION

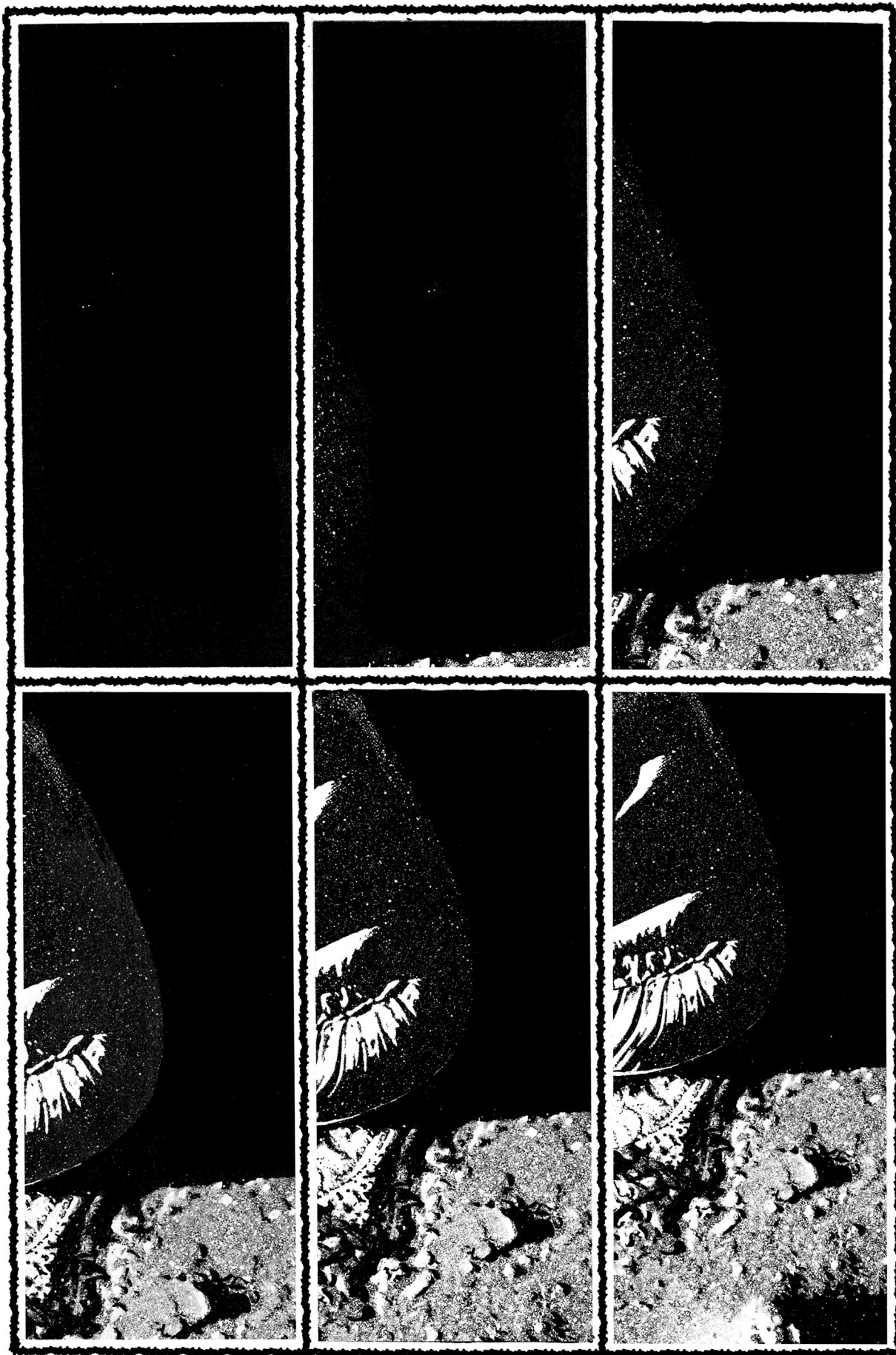
MANY
BUTTONS
ARE PUSHED

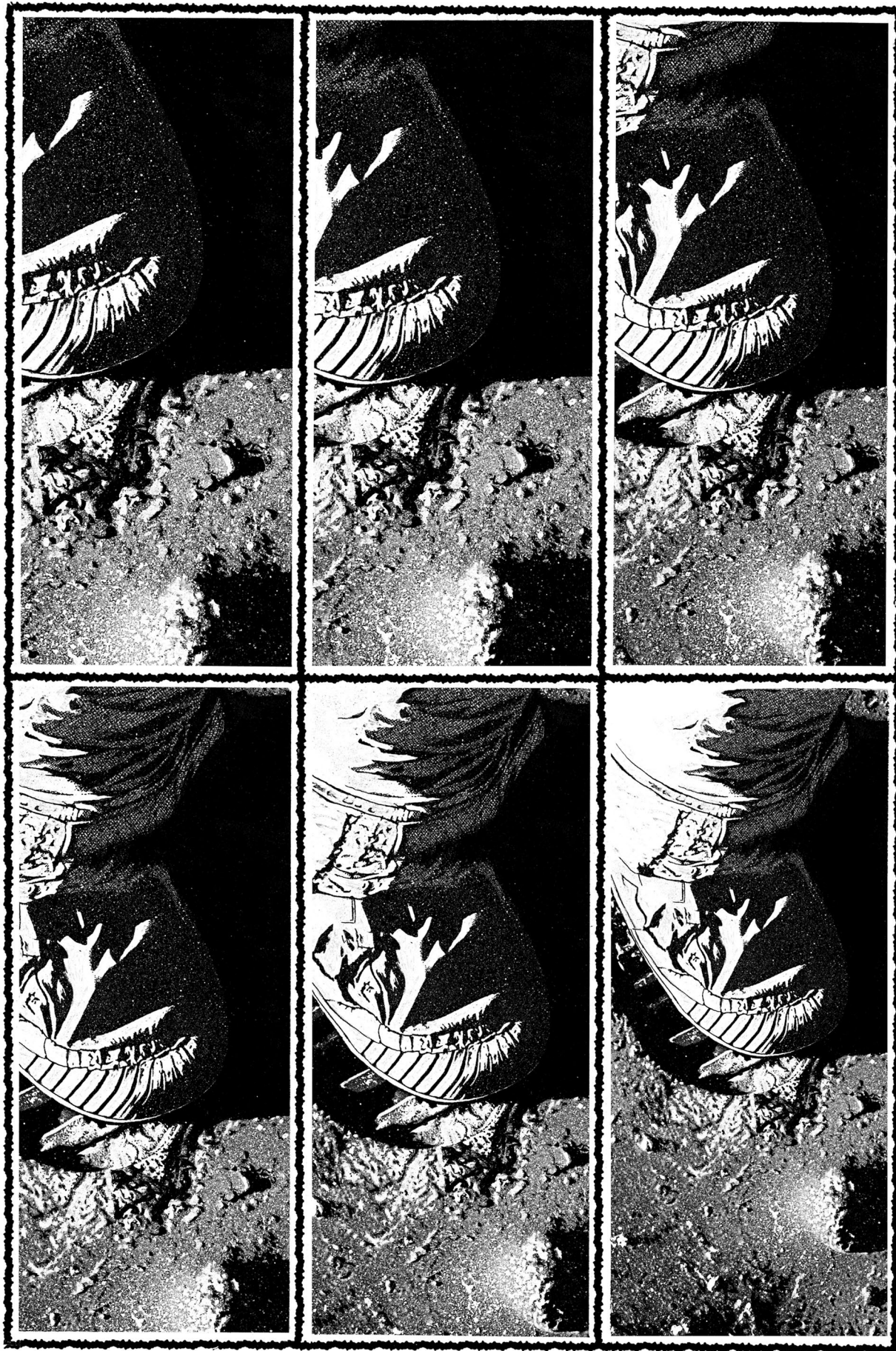


A HUNDRED
MILLION YEARS
AFTERWARD, A
BLUE-GREEN FUNGUS
APPEARS SPONTANEOUSLY
ON ONE OF JUPITER'S
MOONS

IT DIES OUT
WITHIN A
WEEK.

AND THAT'S
IT FOR LIFE
IN THIS
SOLAR
SYSTEM...







WHILE YOU WERE GONE,
THE DEADLINE YOU SET
FOR THE END OF THE
WORLD CAME AND
WENT WITHOUT INCIDENT

ALL OF YOUR
FOLLOWERS
HAVE DESERTED
YOU



CIRIN HAS ATTACKED
AND SEIZED, WITH
HER MERCENARY
FORCES...

LOWER FELDA
AND ALL OF IEST.

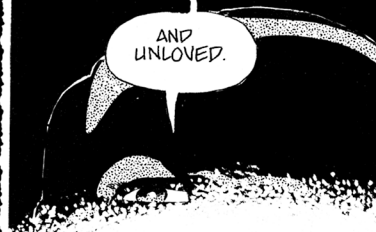
INCLUDING ALL
OF THE GOLD
YOU HAD IN
YOUR HOTEL



YOU LIVE ONLY
A FEW MORE
YEARS,

YOU DIE
ALONE.
UNMOURNED.

AND
UNLOVED.



SUFFERING...



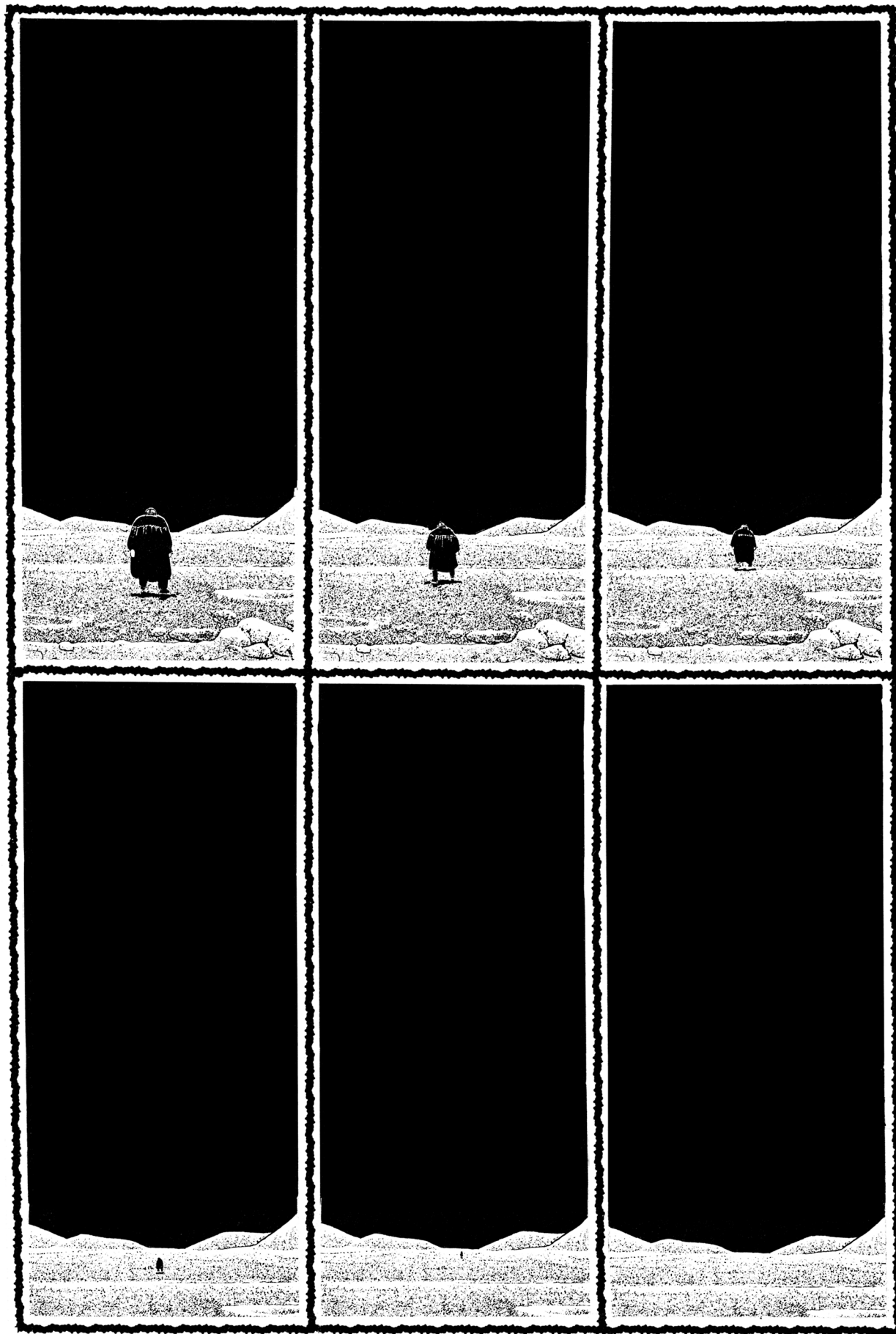
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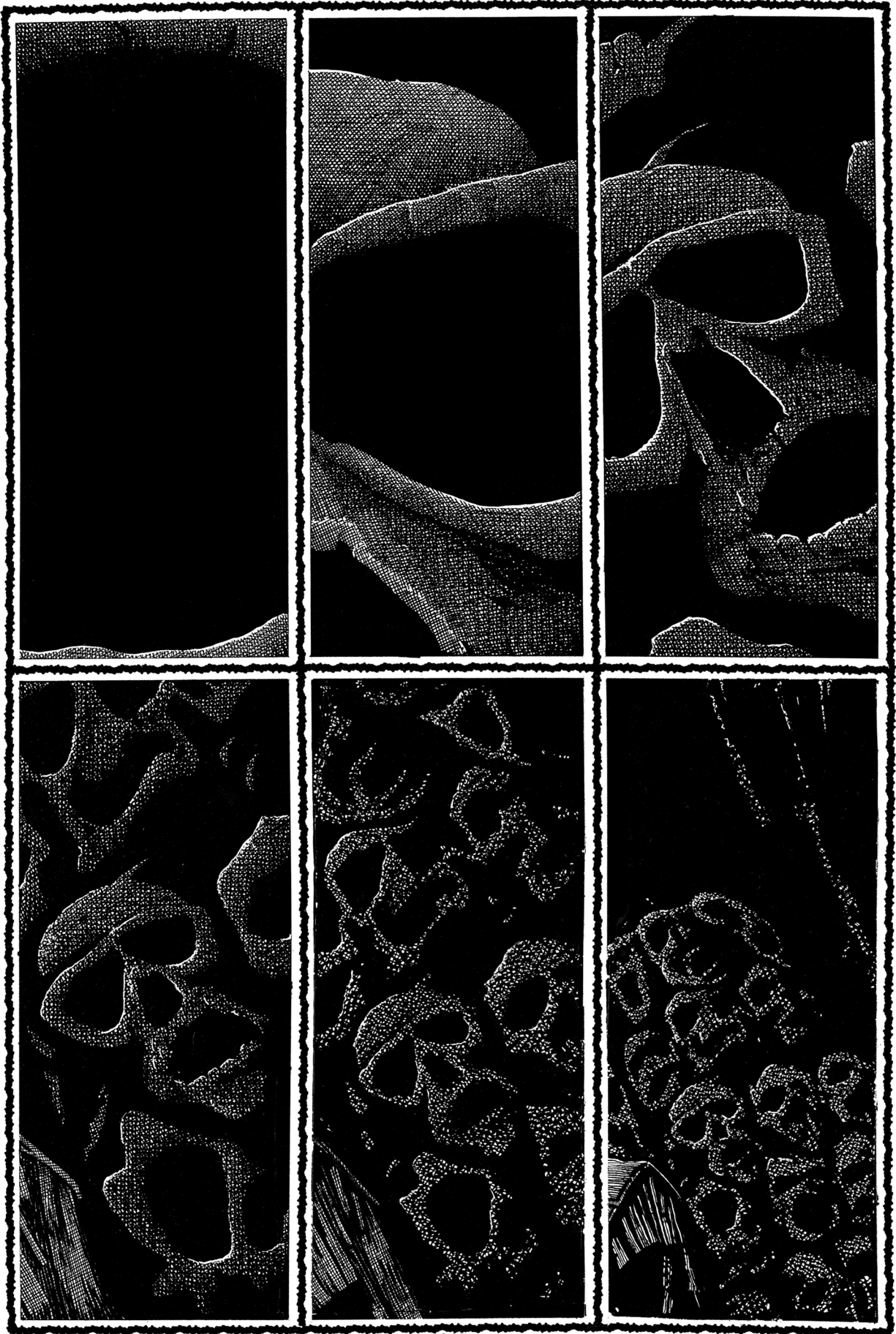


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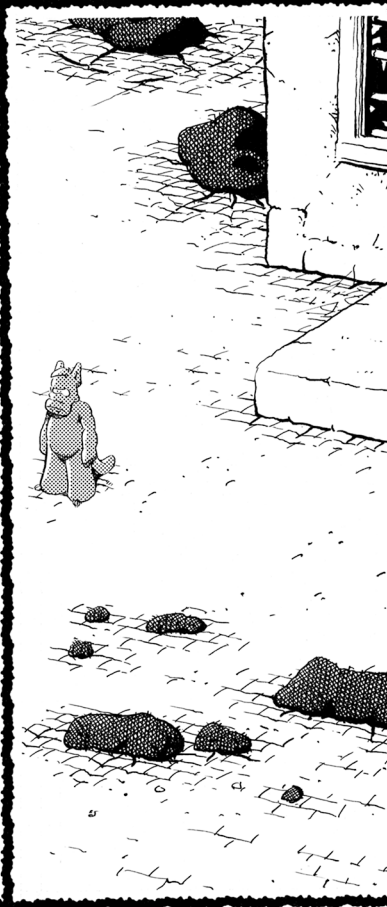
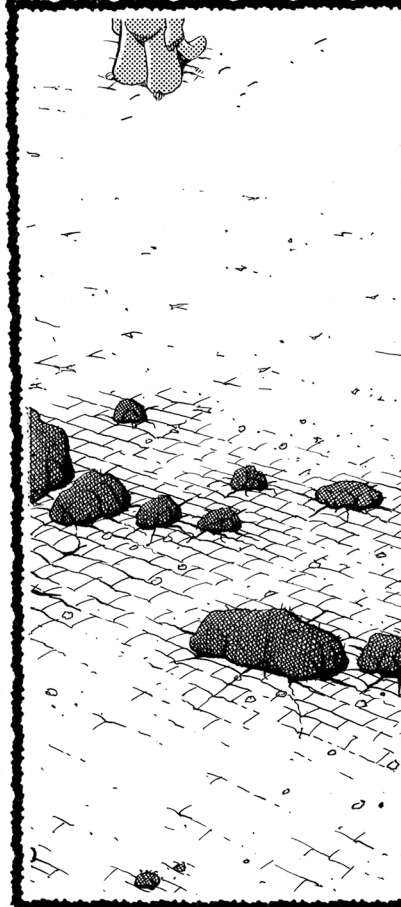
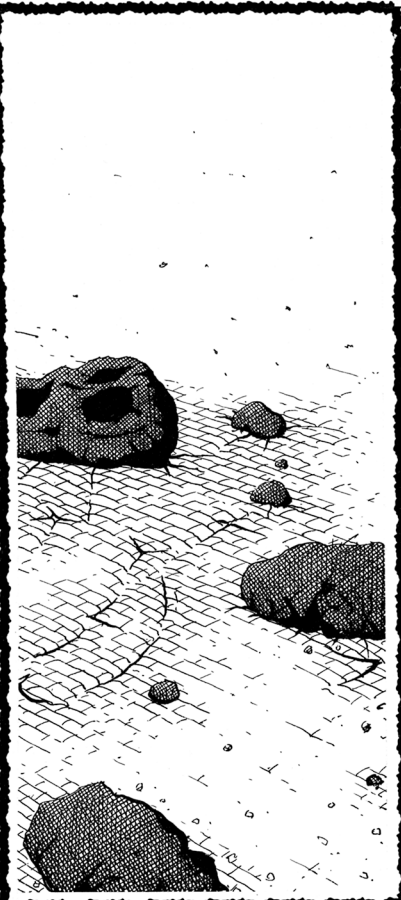
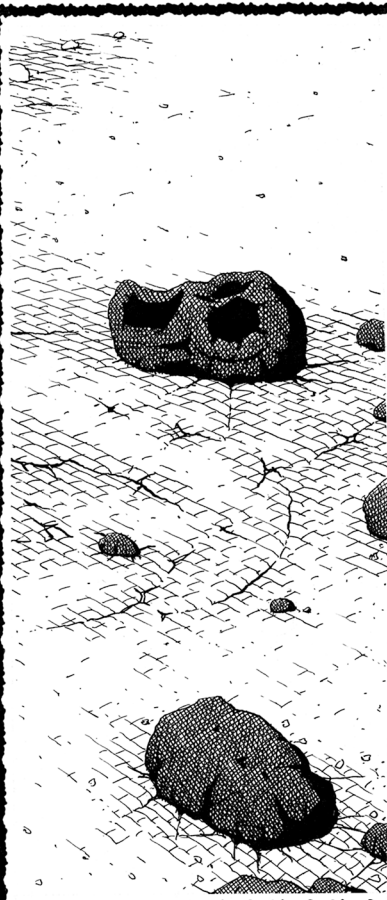
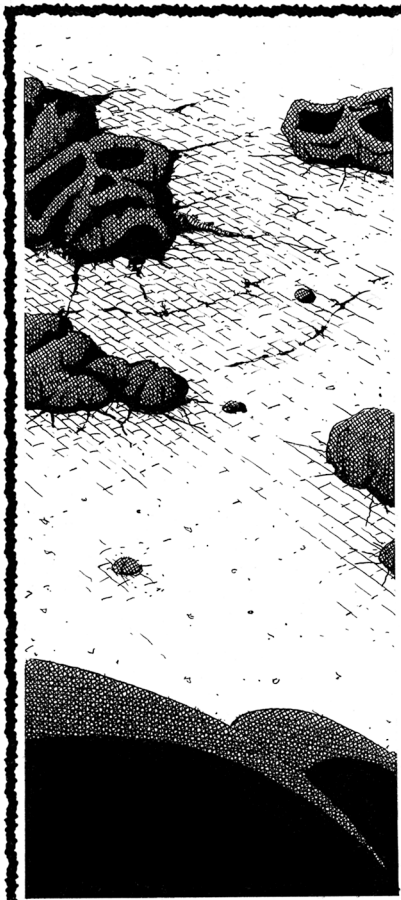
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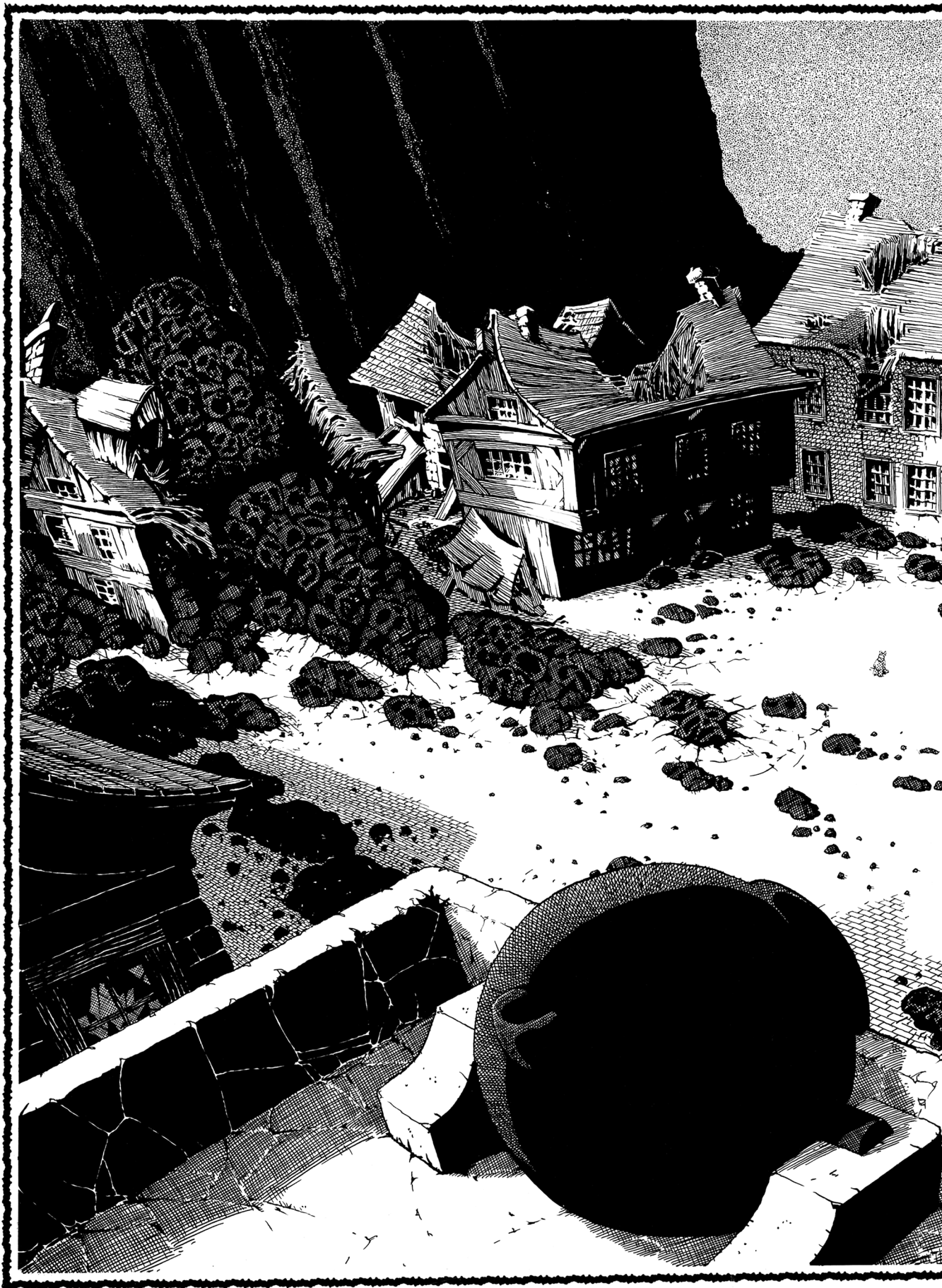
YOUR
SECOND
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FIN

Digital restoration by Living the Line, San Diego, CA:
Sean Michael Robinson with Mara Sedlins

Original art scanned by Sandeep Atwal and Gerhard
Photographic negative materials scanned by Karen Funk
Copy editing by Eddie Khanna, Dave Sim and Jeff Seiler

6,000 WORDS ON THE RESTORED CHURCH & STATE II

*High up above the crowd the great Valerio is walking
The rope seems hung from cloud to cloud, and time stands still while he is walking
His eye is steady on the target
His foot is sure upon the rope
Alone and peaceful as a mountain and certain as the mountain slope*

— Richard Thompson, “The Great Valerio”

Reverberations.

Some moment, some slice of a past event, shattered and fragmented, but so big and so fraught with significance that its echoes reach beyond its own time. Some place, some set of circumstances, some words, filled with power, an emptiness created by the initiation; an empty space capable of pulling in passersby, who, primed for their roles, enact that fundamental conjuncture, again and again...

Church & State II is the second half of the larger *Church & State*, begun in June of 1983 with *Cerebus* No. 51, and completed in June of 1988 with *Cerebus* No. 111. Upon initial collected publication, the book was split down the middle for practical considerations—how are your hands doing holding up just this one half here?—causing this current volume to begin with *Cerebus* No. 81.

An auspicious beginning/midway point.

It’s been said that most “overnight successes” involve a hell of a lot of unseen failures. That truism and many more could apply to the steady steamrolling success of Dave Sim, age 30. Self-made man, self-publisher, self-taught artist and writer, and the greatest mimic ever to work in the comics medium, Sim was by most metrics successful, and certainly sure in his considerable but still-developing abilities—able to take a voice or a cadence or a pose or a walk or a brush style and synthesize it into a life-like character on the page. But after years of this work, a life of living and breathing his comic, of steadily-increasing sales and even renown, Sim was tired.

From Dave Sim’s *Note From the President*, issue 81:

Having fun again.

Sim describes the recent feelings of fatigue, contemplating something...different? New? On the horizon.

So I didn’t do anything for about three weeks on Cerebus. I puttered around. I did housework. I wrote a few essays

[...] *I missed doing the book. Gerhard was bored stiff and Karen [McKiel, Aardvark-Vanaheim administrator] looked like Lady Order at a Chaos banquet.*

So we got two issues done in a little over four weeks. [most likely issues 80 and 81]. Talked to Gerhard one night after consuming enough beer to wax eloquent on the stuff no one knows about Cerebus but me. I told him the original core of the Church and State story-line and mentioned that I was thinking of dropping the whole idea so I can get to the big finish. He persuaded me to leave it in. I had never spoken the dialogue out loud (it came to me three years ago during High Society). Suddenly I can’t wait to get to it.

Strange.

There are several details here worth lingering over. First off, it’s remarkable that two issues as accomplished as issue 80 and 81 of *Cerebus* could be produced in a month’s time, by two men alone, let alone two issues that find Sim and Gerhard’s art styles coalescing into a smoothly-functioning whole. Gerhard had arrived on the monthly book with issue 65, after having collaborated with Sim on several full-color *Cerebus* stories for Marvel’s creator-owned *Epic Magazine*. Gerhard had been a clerk/delivery person for the Artstore of Waterloo and the Sims’ Queen St. apartment had been one of his semi-regular stops. Later, Sim was a tangential presence in Gerhard’s post-Grand River Collegiate “Out-To-Lunch Bunch” social circle: booze-and-drugs parties which alternated between Schneider Heights (44 Schneider Avenue) Camp Woolner (200 Woolner Rd.) and the short-lived Friends of Mr. Cairo restaurant (#1 Market Village) — it was at the latter establishment that Sim had gotten his first close look at Gerhard’s work, framed on the walls.

Though there are remarkable pages and even remarkable issues in that first year and a half of collaboration, it’s issue 80 where Gerhard gains full authority over his considerable skills, fading into the (literal) background when required, and asserting himself in a spectacular way when it serves the story.

That two people could, in less than a eighteen months, transform themselves into ideal collaborators—whose shared style stands as a high-water mark for pen-and-ink illustration in the second half of the twentieth century—is remarkable enough. That they could produce an issue in two weeks is really astounding.

Also of interest is the peek this editorial gives into Sim's process for plotting and planning the book. He discusses "the original core" of the *Church & State* story-line, muses over specific dialogue that has already occurred to him, dialogue which as of that writing, would still be almost a year and a half away. And yet the issue under that very cover features a subject and even title as topical as could possibly be—a parody of Jim Shooter and Al Milgrom's *Secret Wars II*, which ran from July 1985 to March 1986. (Or is it a parody of the original? *Secret Wars II* is itself a sequel to *Marvel Super Hero Secret Wars* by Jim Shooter and Mike Zeck, another miniseries published the year previous, at the behest of toy licensor Kenner.)

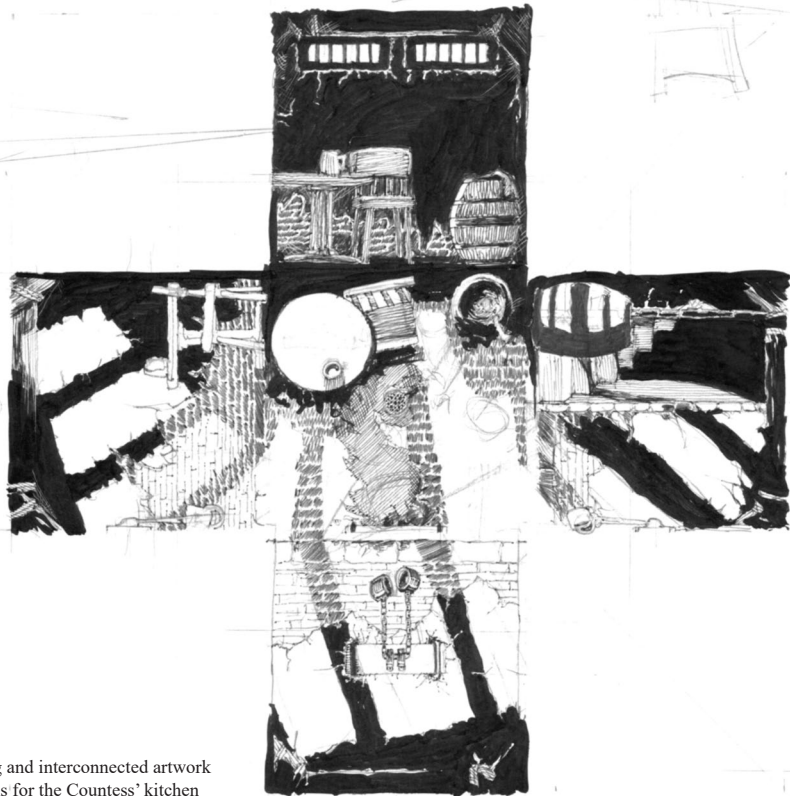
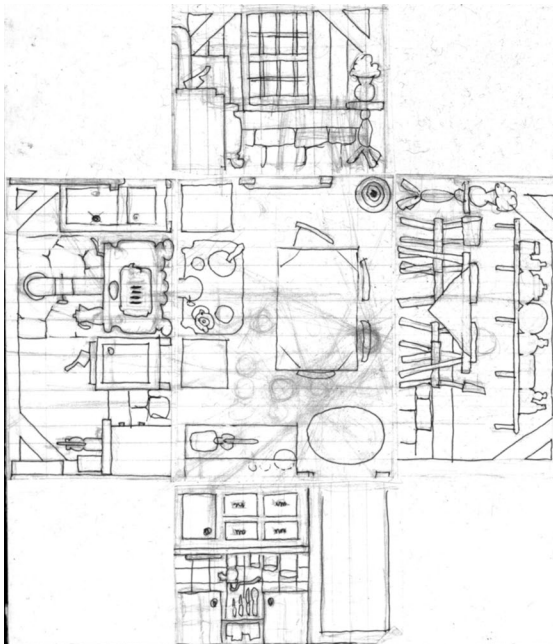
This seeming incongruity—that a twenty-six-year project labored over and at least partially planned years in advance, could adapt itself to parodies of concurrently-published commercial comics—was and continues to be a source of bewilderment to the sort of people who write about comics, and occasionally, to the *Cerebus* audience as well. More on that in a moment. My own estimation, however, is that it's the hidden source of much of the book's power, and many

of its most remarkable and memorable sequences.

Imagine, if you will, the briefest of summaries of issue 81 of *Cerebus* (the first twenty pages of the current volume). Having been flung by Thruk into the Lower City, Cerebus meets up with the mentally unhinged, spiritually-possessed and possibly meta-fictionally-endowed Artemis Strong, who takes Cerebus back to his Lower-City abode, where they discuss the Ascension, and meet the Fleagle Brothers, last seen planning to flee Iest during the invasion. After getting really, really drunk, Cerebus is whisked away by one of the spiritual forces that seem to be converging on the city, all of these movements somehow centering around the black tower, growing slowly above them.

Intriguing as it might be, this unadorned plot description is flat and bare compared to the pages themselves. What's missing? Among other things, the riotously-funny dialogue and art, which gets its "juice" from the voices and styles that are the target of the parody, namely the aforementioned *Secret Wars II*, which is filled to the brim with exposition whose sole purpose is to move the action along to the next punch-em-up. Setting this "CONFLICT!!!" expository tone alongside the religious fervor of the race to messiah-dom provides the power to push the entire sequence over the edge.

In an industry filled with "cosmic" plot-lines that last a few months before the status quo reasserts itself, *Church & State* is the real deal—a dangerous comic,



above left and above right—Evidence of the increasing planning and interconnected artwork of Sim and Gerhard, these are two unusual architectural elevations for the Countess' kitchen (left) and Astoria's cell (right) that show all four walls and floor plan in a flattened view. Not coincidentally, these are the two locations in the book that are wholly new and not based on previous work by either Sim or Gerhard. This style of planning would reach a whole new level of complexity in the next two books, *Jaka's Story* and *Melmoth*.

where the various actors behave like real people, beholden only to their own self-conceptions—impulsive, unpredictable, but always real and authentic and grounded.

Secret Wars writer Jim Shooter's genius was to recognize the inherent conservatism of the existing comics form, and take that conservatism to the nth degree. (Stan Lee's possibly-apocryphal paraphrase, regardless of its unknowable factual basis, is surely relevant. According to Sean Howe, author of *Marvel Comics: The Untold Story*, this was the state of things at Marvel Comics as early as 1968: "For the last year or two, Lee had conveyed to his writers that Marvel's stories should have only 'the illusion of change,' that the characters should never evolve too much, lest their portrayals conflict with what licensees had planned for other media.") Jim Shooter took this attitude to its logical extreme, plotting and planning a company-wide cross-over miniseries "event" that would infect (and encourage purchase of) every single current monthly Marvel title, and yet would, in the end, change nothing about any title.

Also missing from my summary is the non-diagetic friction that is created from this contrast of elements. By 1985, Sim had created a certified phenomenon, at least on the modest scale of the comics industry. Cerebus, both the title character and the book that bore his name, had risen from the glorified-fanzine status of the early issues to a circulation of 26,500 as of issue 81, a circulation figure to which only a handful of black-and-white titles not distributed on any newsstands had attained. And the existing powers were interested. (From an editorial a few months later: "People are offering me a lot of money for *Cerebus*. Depending on how much they want to devour, the numbers get pretty wild. For the whole nine yards, DC's offer was in six figures.")

Having created a popular, even beloved, character, then currently experiencing a sales growth that showed no signs of abating anytime soon, there existed a template for a way forward. The Marvel Way. Corporate conservatism. Sell the "intellectual property" ("product", in the parlance of 1985 comics culture) to a corporate entity more than capable of milking it dry, an entity who can hire indentured laborers (i.e. writers and artists) to freeze the title in ice, periodically thawing the surface for a quick re-design to "expand the line", and hop on over to any other breaking waves.

Instead, slowly, and unnoticed, Sim did the opposite. Sim destroyed his characters, at least, as it might be understood by a business person. He destroyed their marketability, their futures as t-shirt hawkers or chotske adorners or Hollywood feature explosion vehicles, by allowing them to develop organically.

There are incidents in the first half of *Church & State* that indicate the way forward—most infamously, Cerebus throws a baby off the steps of the hotel into a terrified crowd of worshippers; Cerebus throws an old man off of the roof of the same building—but the context of these events, the sudden bouncy style of the art, and the omission

of any visual depiction of the impact, serve to soften the blow. If the letters column and the sales are any indication, the audience still *identifies* with Cerebus, and, presumably, roots for him.

Things shift in issue 94, January 1987 (or so says the cover date), with the imprisonment and rape of Astoria, one of the most complex and nuanced characters to have appeared in *Cerebus*. A typical non-response (at least among the printed letters) comes from reader Mark Pickles. "So Dave Sim is perverted, (so what else is new?). But what's worse is that we have to fork out good money for only ¾ of an issue, the rest being totally black with a bit of lettering. So, next time you do an issue like this, give us our money's worth, leave the light ON."

Sim himself seems surprised by the lack of response to the event among his readership, a topic he addresses in No. 99's Note From the President. "I believe Cerebus raped Astoria. A number of Cerebus fans don't think so, venturing the opinion 'she was asking for it.' Are they wrong? It depends on your point of view. I don't think there is such a thing as 'asking for it' (unless she literally 'asks for it' verbally). Cerebus changed the terms under which she was offering her 'favour' (one of which was a gag to preclude her dissension). That is rape (to me). As I say a number of readers disagree. That is scary." He concludes by pointing to a lack of responses from his female readership, and invites their responses as well. (Those responses from women readers, interesting and nuanced to a letter, run without comment in the letters column of issue 102.)

Having created an impulsive, avaricious, and lusty character, Sim allows his character the leeway to act independently, while he, as author, simply presents situations to his characters to which they react, with dwindling concessions to the (non-fictional) consequences from his readership.

What about that readership? And what about those "writers on comics" I alluded to earlier?

Sim never seemed to shy away from printing reader letters critical of his comic or even of himself as a person, but the level of combativeness in the second half of the *Church & State* era is off the charts.

In Issue 86 reader Paul Lukacs lectures Sim about story structure, and concludes: "a *Secret Wars* parody – Correction: an unfunny, difficult-to-read *Secret Wars* parody – does not belong just haphazardly thrown into a graphic novel. You should be reaching past timeliness into timelessness. Also, the storyline meandered far further than it should have. [...] Most importantly, do not ever, ever think that your fans will put up with anything. They will not."

Issue 93 features this rosy little letter from Mark Haden Frazer: "When you've created a body of work that rivals a Harlan Ellison or Jorge Luis Borges, then perhaps you

can sit in your ivory tower and piss on the rest of us. But until then, keep in mind that you're doing a comic book. A black and white with a circulation of 30,000. Not literature. Junk culture. Perhaps when CEREBUS is finished, and published in deluxe graphic novel format, it will be considered literature. I hope so, but that day isn't here yet."

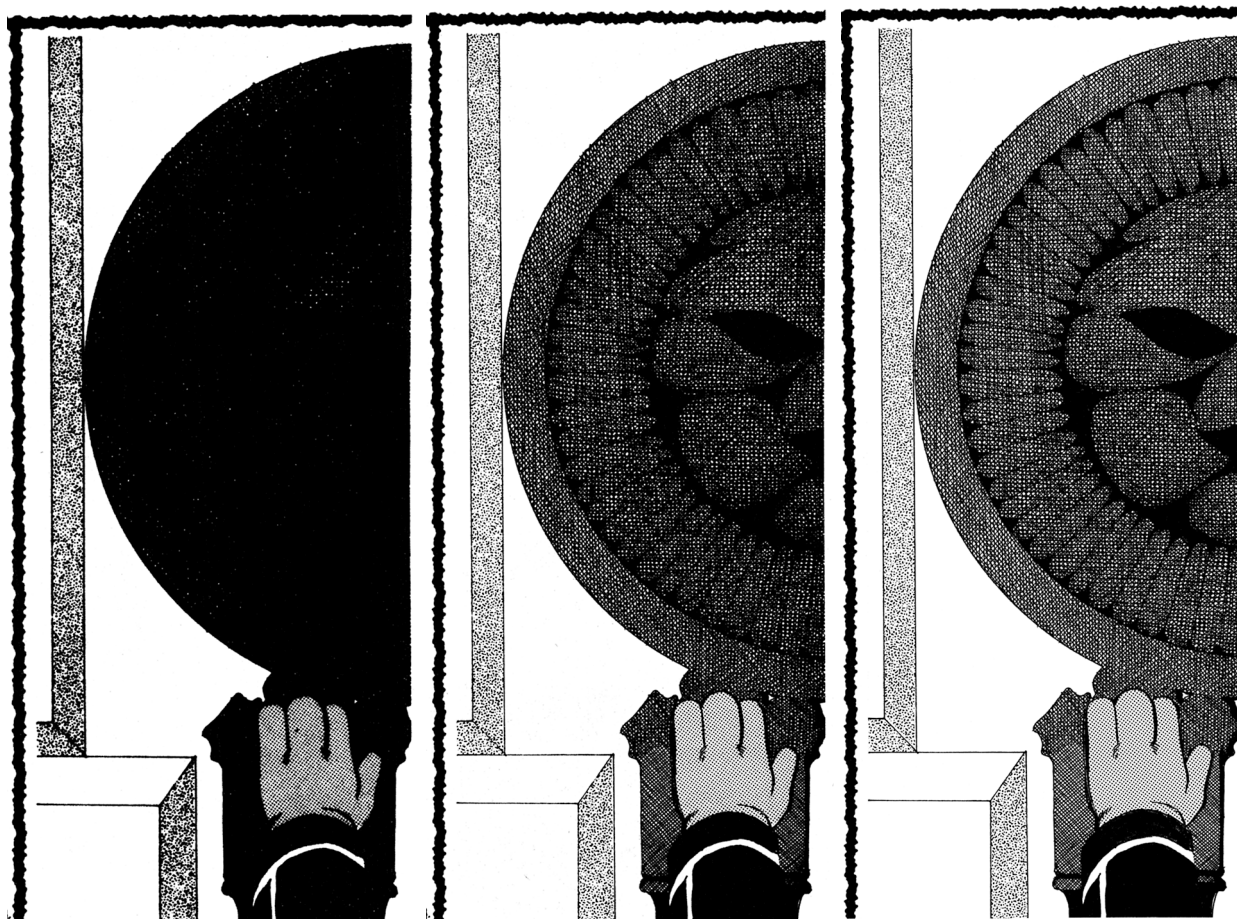
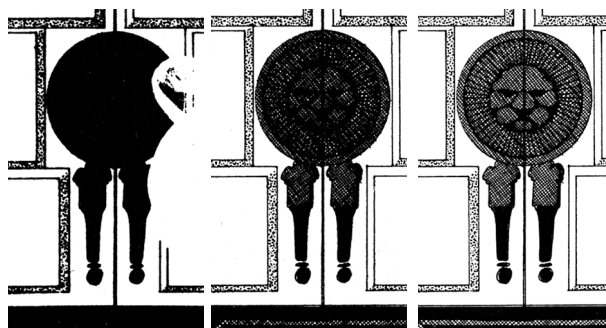
When comics press and comic critics (largely constituted from the ranks of *comics enthusiasts*) have deigned to write about *Cerebus*, they've done so with a not-inconsiderable amount of squirmy discomfort with the subject at hand, especially when it comes to these issues of collision of "high" and "low" culture.

Long-time *The Comics Journal* writer and pot-shot-taker R. Fiore summed up his perception of other's opinions of the work in a dismissive 2004 essay, "Quixote Triumphant". "Sim convinced himself that *Cerebus* could accommodate any content he wanted to" while those luminaries sharing his view of comics as art were, Fiore conjectures, put off by "the fantasy trappings and the commercial comics idiom." He continued this line of thought in several online *The*

Comics Journal comments in 2011. "If parody is going to endure then it has to parody subjects that are going to endure."

Of course, this needn't be an academic question. As I said at the time in response to Fiore: "I think the likelihood of Sim's parody/pastiche elements [being forgotten and thus harming *Cerebus*] is pretty overstated. I say this as someone who read the first five or so books as an early teenager with no exposure at all to Moon Night[sic], Captain America, Elrick[sic], Swamp Thing, or Groucho Marx (I know, I know) [...]. It's hard to predict how People of the Future will react to such things. I have it on good authority that Lewis Carroll's work is filled with allusions

left, middle, and right— Three generations of the same image. The far left is from the ninth printing of *Church & State II*, the original negative for the page having been discarded at some point in the book's history. The middle image is how the panel appeared in the original issue, and the far right is the image newly-restored directly from the original art board.



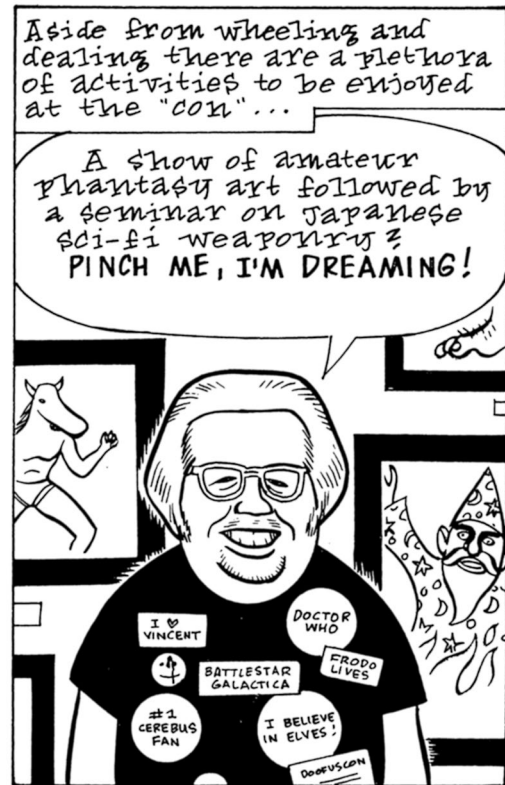
to contemporary events—most modern readers aren't really reading that into them now."

But there's something more fundamental underlying these kinds of dismissive comments, heavy with speculation about how some theoretical audience would react to the work. It's a tendency in the comics field I'd like to call "status anxiety". Comics being a marginalized and largely-ignored field has led enthusiasts and even practitioners, eager for broader readership or institutional recognition, to reject in every way possible associations with the perceived "low" aspects of the field, and the attendant aesthetic signifiers of those aspects, what's "in" and "out" at any given time depending upon the popular tropes of that time. When the general public's primary exposure to "comics" was through a campy, fun television show (*Batman*, 1966-1968), the comics field (superhero and non-superhero titles alike) reacted largely by becoming more "gritty" and "realistic" on the surface. When, more than a decade later, the fascistic (and, frankly, silly and childish) impulses underlying the superhero itself became more obvious (thanks in no small part to Sim's parodies, Frank Miller's *Daredevil* and *Dark Knight Returns*, and the genre-deconstructing work of Alan Moore), the "art" camp of the field retreated from any associations with those genres.

The documentary *Masters of Comic Book Art*, directed by Ken Viola and released in 1987, is instructive. The line-up of artists includes visual innovators of the previous decade, by necessity, superhero artists—Neal Adams, Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby—along with the undisputed non-genre masters, the exceptions to the rule—Will Eisner, Harvey Kurtzman, Moebius, Bernie Wrightson—and finally, the young innovators of the field—Frank Miller, Dave Sim, and art spiegleman. And who acts as host, introducing us to the material, strutting for the camera in a banana-colored Member's Only jacket while being menaced by his overstuffed bookshelves which loom threateningly above him? Harlan Ellison. A science fiction writer, a successful one, both financially and critically, one whose many novels, and late-sixties *Dangerous Visions* anthologies, helped make the case for science-fiction-as-literature, at a time when such a notion was solely the province of the young or the feeble-minded.

In fact, the critical renaissance that comics have experienced over the past decade and a half or so was created explicitly by embracing the false dichotomy of the "high" and "low" divide, using the dismissive language of the visual arts to transform early comics practitioners into "outsider artists" whose visual crudity—necessitated by the poor pay, poor printing, back-breaking labor, and speed requirements of serial storytelling—became embraced as expressive power. Similarly, this "outsider" status has been used to bolster the pretensions to art made by comics practitioners whose draftsmanship and sometimes even basic visual abilities were oftentimes severely lacking compared to their, ahem, low-brow, debased peers.

(An interesting parallel read on this issue is the take of one



above: Status anxiety. From "Dan Pussey presents Komic Collectors Korner". Eightball #8, 1992. Art and writing by Daniel Clowes.

Carson Grubaugh, a fine artist who also happens to be a cartoonist, and Dave Sim's collaborator on *The Strange Death of Alex Raymond*. He wrote the following to me in response to an earlier draft of this essay. "I see all of the swiping and parody as a way of tapping into the collective subconscious of the time that the book was made. It is distillation of all the stories we were telling our selves in the previous however many years. Each one of those particular tropes told a certain kind of truth from a certain point of view, but in *Cerebus* these 'truths' team up, go to war, politic against one another, fuck, etc. which winds up creating an even more refined distillation, a 'higher' truth... maybe.").

In truth, these status-conscious critics are not wrong, excepting their actual opinions. *Church and State* represents an unusual combination of influences, the work of an extremely creative mind, an autodidact with syncretic impulses, a voracious reader and devourer of culture from childhood through his adult life, taking his many ingredients— Barry Windsor-Smith; Will Eisner; The Marx Brothers; the *Illuminatus* trilogy; the tarot; the novels of Dostoevsky; *Merry Melodies* shorts; *The Dick Van Dyke Show*; hundreds of non-fiction books on politics and history and religion and art; untold thousands of American comics of the 1950s and 60s; The Rolling Stones—and concluding "these things are not that dissimilar." Or, at least, "There's some commonality of theme here."

What these critics miss, in my humble opinion, is that the

frictions these types of source materials generate when juxtaposed, the rub of their textures and the varied patterns of their design, create an entirely new thing in the merging.

Purely from a structural standpoint, it's difficult to identify works that function quite the same way as *Cerebus*. Sim himself took a shot at it in an interview with Heidi McDonald in 1985.

If you're talking about doing a 300-issue story-line, you've got to have a number of major surprises [...] And I understand when people say, the last three issues have been dull, or whatever, complain nothing's happened, but, to me, it's a matter of contrast. If nothing happens for three issues, then you know that in the fourth issue will be a major revelation[...] There's no question that reading a single issue of Cerebus is not likely to convince someone to buy the book regularly. But I figure let someone read 10 issues in a row and I might as well be pushing heroin.[...] I basically appeal to people like myself, who went through reading comics and got shell-shocked. The universe blowing up. Big guys eating planets. Cosmic rays, dead guys coming back. You know, all this mayhem and murder. Cerebus is quiet because of the contrast.

Later, it was McDonald's reaction to the ending of *Church & State* that seemed to typify the muted response to the conclusion of the book. "Too darn cosmic." In a *Cerebus* retrospective essay, Fiore ventured an overlapping opinion, calling the ending of *Church & State* an "anti-climax".

Interestingly, several of the general thrusts of criticism leveled at the book echo those directed at one of the most celebrated of the Victorian serial novels, *Vanity Fair*, by William Makepeace Thackeray. It was a book, like *Cerebus*, that pushed boundaries, in both structural issues and in the tastes and orthodoxies of its various audiences. Like *Cerebus*, it was serialized and written in installments with its author able to react to audience response in something approximating real-time. The book was issued in collected form in 1848, when it gained the subtitle, "A Novel Without a Hero". It's hard to imagine a more fitting summary, given the book's bleak outlook, scathing satire, and cynical view of humanity.

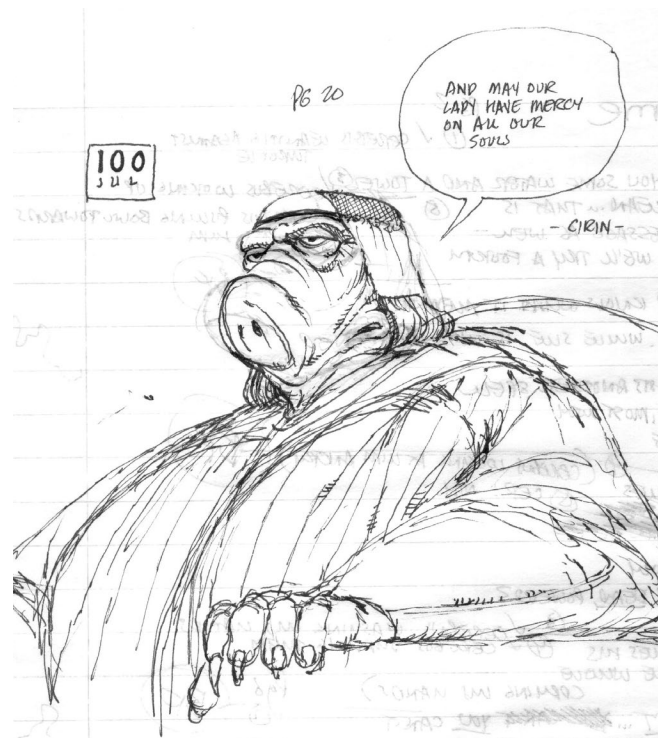
The commonalities sit in plain sight. *Vanity Fair* centers around two women of very different social standing, and their progress through their early lives to old age. One of the women, the wily and skilled Becky Sharp, rides a rollercoaster of fortune, using every opportunity and every person around her to provide herself with profit and comfort, and ends the book having most likely murdered her former suitor. And yet it is Becky Sharp, not the supposed virtuous Emilia, with whom we identify, for whom we root, who we wish to succeed. Secondly, several major events of *Vanity Fair* happen entirely off-page, either summarized for us or recalled by other characters. *Vanity Fair* takes place during the time of the Napoleonic Wars, but those events largely stay in the background until an event mid-way through the book, when, in a dramatic

scale-shift, we are brought to the scene of a battle for a single crucial second. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* narrator makes the cheeky suggestion that he shies away from depicting the battlefields of the Napoleonic Wars due to his own lack of experience as a military man, but the real reason is the sheer narrative power of those shifts. By carefully selecting which of these moments he will depict and by letting us forget for hundreds of pages at a time that there is a war on, he shapes our responses to the events when they actually arrive.

I pick *Vanity Fair* for comparison because it's a work I happen to know well, but any of the dozen other truly great, initially serialized works from this infancy period of the novel would serve to make the point. There is a special power to be had in creating works on the tight-rope, without a net, before the watching audience. And those resulting works, in the hands of the truly committed, can be those rarest of artistic creations: those works that break new ground, that enrich audiences and practitioners alike, who find benefit in the innovations now available to them.

About that word *scale*.

Church & State could be read as an exercise, even an instruction manual, in scale shifting. Most obviously, there are the diagetic shifts: *Cerebus*' gradual occupational transformations, from Prime Minister, to hustler, to house-guest hustler, to Pope of the Western Church, to



above: A development sketch of Cirin, from Sim's planning notebooks, lined spiral notebooks that he used to write, plan, doodle, and develop issues of the monthly book. Her physical appearance is mostly there from the first (including those claws), but the less-modest head gear would be swapped out before arriving at the first finished page.

would-be “messiah” (have “scare quotes” ever been more necessary?); the character discongruities represented by Thunk and/or “that painter guy”, both of which literally exist on a different scale than Cerebus. (It’s only through extra-narrative intervention—a beyond-the-grave message from his foe Weissaupt—that Cerebus succeeds in defeating the first of these oversized opponents. The second—the three-headed “Fred and Ethel and that painter guy”—can only be evaded, until the three-headed creature is done in by its own wrongness of scale.)

And there are the extra-narrative scale changes. How, for twenty pages, our title character can be locked in a conflict against the Roach, Astoria, even the snow, everything conspiring against him, the crisis amplified by the pitch-perfect Frank Miller narration parody. But then, thirty pages later, we’re (temporarily) back in a small scale comedy. “Cerebus gets his picture painted”.

But the climax of the book is the largest narrative scale-shift of them all—the first ascension of Cerebus, which ends in what appears to be a theophany. Cerebus meets a mysterious figure in black robes who gives him insight into his world, its history, his own nature, and the fate of the planet, all before delivering a history of the universe—the Big Bang as rape of the female cosmos. (The character of The Judge himself is something of a scale shift—although Sim did some design work in his notebooks trying to come up with a suitable appearance for the character, he ultimately settled on a pastiche of the Judge character

from the film adaptation of Jules Feiffer’s *Little Murders*. Looking at the footage from the film itself, it’s easy to see why Sim might have been drawn to the character—actor and fellow Ontarian Lou Jacobi is dynamic and expressive in ways perfect for appropriation for a comic strip, with rhythmical vocal cadences and mobile brows and eyes that “sell” each change of expression. The genius stroke, however, is not in appropriating his speech rhythms and image, but in applying those mannerisms as-is to such an incongruous role).

The other interesting side-effect of the serialization of the work is the ways in which the pragmatic needs of producing pages and getting the book back on schedule led to art innovations that broadened the aesthetic and storytelling palette of the book itself. One among these innovations is the generous use of the photocopier. It was used to create animation-like effects: subtle changes of character expression from panel to panel emphasized and enhanced by their enactment against (and in contrast with) fixed backdrops or, conversely, by character immobility while objects and/or text and/or sound effects raged around them.

More examples? The various organically-textured screen-tone sheets, along with a generous helping of cross-hatching and brush work beneath or sometimes atop, made for a quick applied texture to various page elements (Thunk, Fred and Ethel, the stone heads, the stonework of the throne room and Astoria’s cell, etc). Both the snowstorm earlier in the book and the lunar surface have an effective organic texture created with the “poor man’s air brush”, i.e. a toothbrush whose bristles had been carefully “loaded” with diluted white water-colour paint (for the former effect) and undiluted india ink (for the latter) and then flicked carefully as tightly controlled spatter over the finished illustrations (whose word balloons and lettering had been masked off). Emphasis on carefully: there being no way to “patch” the effect or the drawing underneath if the paint or ink “load”—or the tension in the flick of the bristles—was anything but 100% exact. Thumbs were (literally) pressed into service for the smoky textures on the edges of the “Countess” sequence. The jagged Letratape borders, which first appeared during *High Society*, serve as another example, enabling quick setup of the page and a strong but interesting holding line for each panel, as well as the clean white edge created by the carrier film of the tape. PMTs, or photo mechanical transfers—created by the printer, Preney Print and Litho—enabled easy creation of white-on-black lettering and sound effect elements.

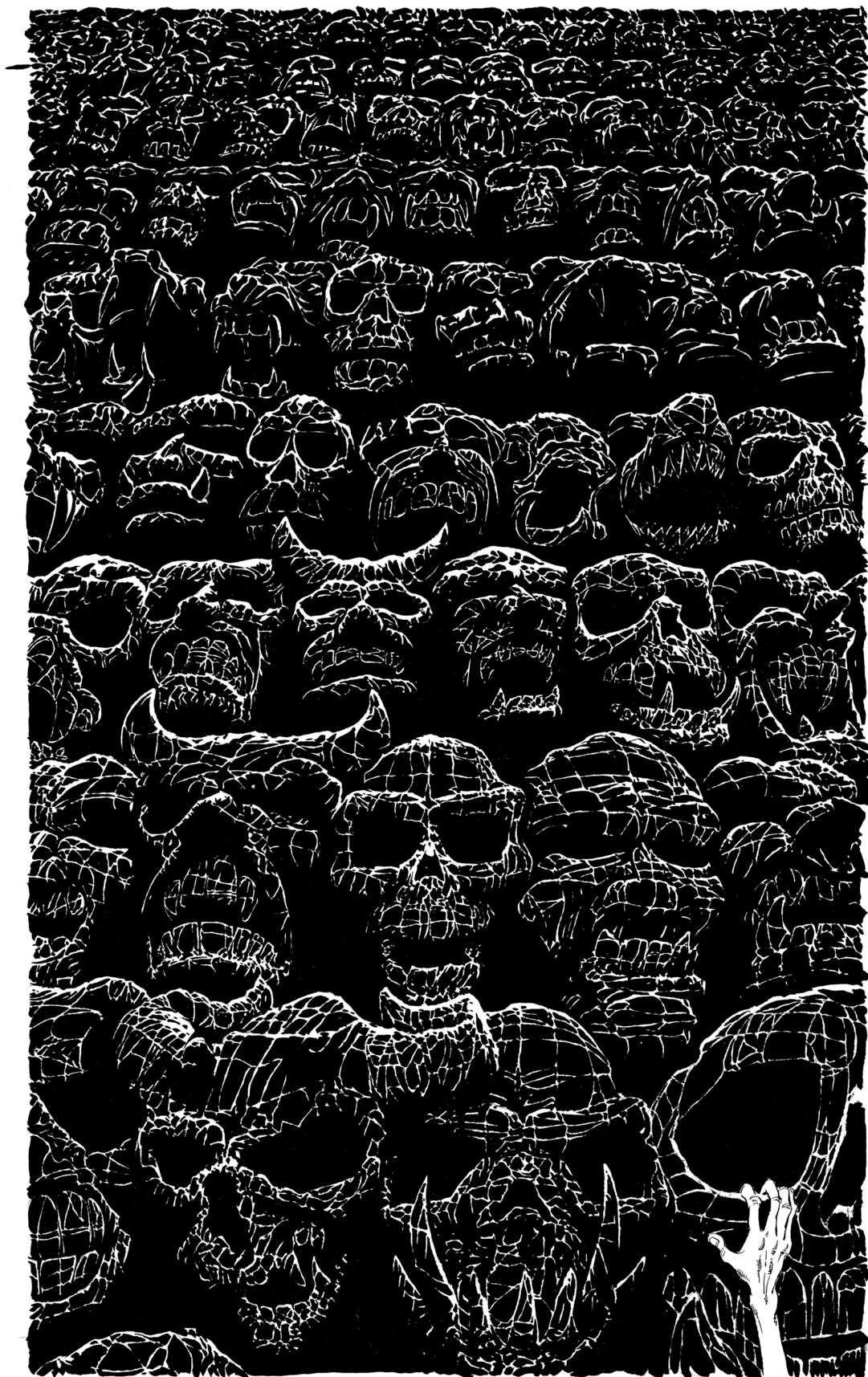
Take a look at page 764 of the current volume for an interesting example of several of these techniques at work simultaneously. In panels one and two, the blood smears on Weisshaupt’s face were created with the edge of Sim’s finger pressed into some drying ink. The repeated figures in panels five and six (very effectively communicating Cerebus’ disorientation) were created with photocopies. For the rings of distortion on the background of panel five, Gerhard photocopied the finished panel, cut arcs out of the photocopy, and then pasted down the remainder on top of



above—An early development rough of “the Judge”, sketched by Sim in one of his ruled notebooks that he used for much of the planning of the book. Note that he’s already floating, but has yet to be “cast” as Lou Jacobi and Jules Feiffer’s *Little Murders* judge, and is instead adhering to a more traditional “wise old man” look.



above— Fun with photocopiers. *Cerebus* issue 89 page 10 (pg 764 of the current volume), panels five and six, reproduced at 100 percent of the original art size. This sequence of the book makes inventive use of the studio photocopier, as you can see from the grayscale reproduction above. On panel five (left), Gerhard has photocopied the entire background, then cut arcs out of the copy, centering the radiations around the sound effect (and center of vision of the POV panel). He's then rotated these sliced copies before pasting them back down, leaving an effective and unique visual distortion to the final page. The Weisshaupt figures on both panels five and six are similarly treated, reduced and duplicated to create Cerebus' visual disorientation from his own point of view. The (photocopied) background on the right is similarly overlapped with white lines radiating out from the figures. Either of these effects would be more difficult to conceive or execute with solely traditional media, but are fairly rare (if direct) examples of the collage techniques that a photocopier enabled. Also of note-- the two types of Letratape used on the page — the "jaggy" border tape with clear carrier, and the white tape at the bottom and right, used to mask off the image edge.



the original drawing, leaving a sort of visual distortion/smearing effect across the architecture. Elsewhere the photocopier was used to reduce elements to sizes that would have otherwise be impossible to draw by hand (the tiny Astoria and Weisshaupt figures in the same sequence, dialogue in several sections of the Thrunk scenes, the Judge's dwindling monologue as Cerebus walks out of range of his voice, etc.)

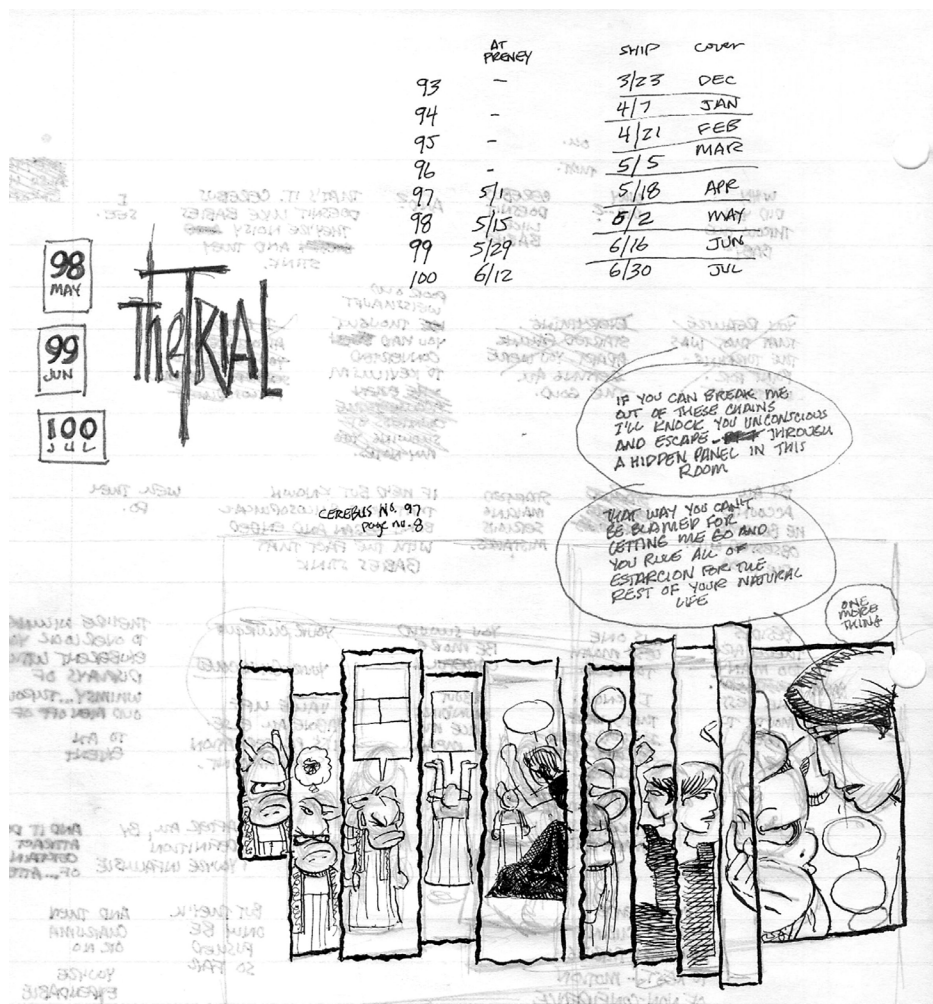
Pragmatism also seemingly influenced the innovative panel layouts of pages 837 to 967 of the current volume (issues 93 through 100 in the original issues). That entire sequence features a masterful use of panel size and shape to manipulate reading speed, the narrow, exclamation-mark-like slices dividing the page into percussive beats that push the pacing forward, with the skillful use of dialogue play manipulating the pace even further, as the characters play

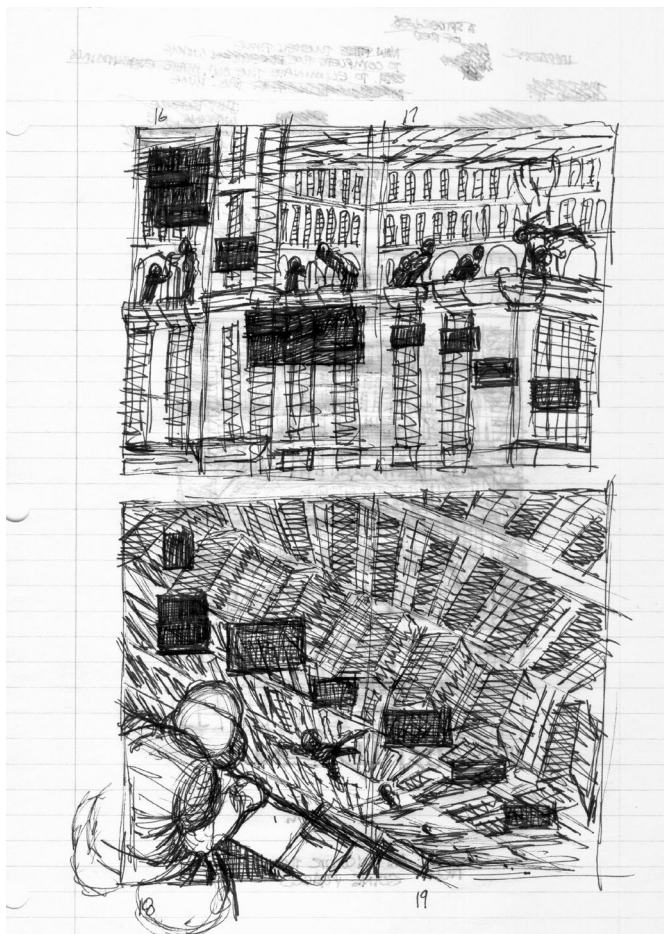
out their familiar drama while the tower continues to grow. This staccato rhythm is broken during several portions of the sequence, at purposeful places—during Cerebus' disturbed sleep after the rape of Astoria; during the trial in the throne room; and most expressively, during the aborted “escape” sequence, where Astoria has finally persuaded Cerebus to free her. The additional white space and varying panel shape also brings further attention to the “negative space” of the page, adding an additional powerful design element to the sequence.

The pragmatism at work? Reducing the drawn and lettered portion of the page. During this sequence, the book was actually published every other week, in a (successful) attempt to reconcile the cover dates with the actual publishing dates, the publication dates having slipped back gradually over several years. And yet through that,

facing page— A rarity, an unidentified and unused illustration from early in the production of this book, possibly depicting Mick, and possibly intended as a rendering test for the tower, which grows in increasing prominence throughout the book. This is a graphic, and rather stark, solution to the problem, and perhaps more visually striking than the final solution of dark scribble tone over hatching and areas of black. But it's hard to imagine that it would have actually functioned very well *in situ*, as such a graphic solution might prove distracting behind the characters.

below— Another page from one of Sim's planning notebooks. This one gives an interesting view into the planning of the book, from both artistic and pragmatic standpoint. Below are two layouts from issue 97 (pages 924 and 925 of the current volume). A glance at the finished pages will show you how closely they adhere compositionally to the direct-to-ink doodles below. Also notable — the rather shocking printer shedule noted at the top of the page, wherein Sim plans to get back on schedule and finally reconcile the delivery dates with the printed cover dates, by producing four issues in a row every two weeks.





this page and next— The many layout techniques of Dave Sim. Presented here are a Whitman's Sampler of *Cerebus* layouts from Sim's production notebooks during the era of *Church & State II*. As evidenced from this albeit image-heavy sample, he utilized every conceivable layout technique on the book: everything from long-form plotting, to bullet-pointed "plot point" lists, to play-style dialogue, to tiny thumbnailed visual layouts, to the larger, more complete layouts you see to the right. I don't think it's any coincidence that the latter sequence, Astoria and *Cerebus* in the jail cell, is one of the most exquisitely-acted sequences of the book, the characters moving seemingly effortlessly across the page. It also happens to be the most animation-like sequence. The work having been put in at the beginning, in both layout and planning of location, the work on the actual page can be reserved for the pleasure of drawing, and wringing out every bit of expression from the figures and the lighting.

During the two and a half years of work on the book, Sim and Gerhard tried out a variety of approaches to their work process, including varying their actual physical location, producing various issues in Gainesville, Florida, on the road at various comics conventions, and even in Honolulu, Hawaii. This last location is the explanation for the unusual choice in the layout to the left. Sim didn't generally sketch backgrounds at this point in the book, leaving that entirely to Gerhard, unless Sim had some specific problem to solve related to the story or a particular prop or location.

As Sim wrote back in 2015: "These are Hawaii pages. Rose [Gerhard's then-girlfriend] had come to visit Gerhard and he was taking the week off to spend time with her -- staying at her hotel just off Waikiki Beach while I was in the condo at the Marina -- so I was left to try to figure out a way to keep everything moving forward while actually running up ahead on my own. And that seemed to be the best way to do it: thumbnail the backgrounds in my notebook and then finish my part of the page. I had to get far enough ahead so that I wouldn't need my notebook if he needed it for reference. I didn't LIKE to thumbnail backgrounds because that tended to confine Gerhard to a predetermined "his side" of the page. And I knew from experience he always came up with better things if they were HIS from the git-go.

They're really nice pages -- but they needed to be relatively quick pages for Gerhard if he was going to make up the week where he fell behind me. And that was never predictable. We see -- and saw -- differently. Trying to 'do' MY background usually slowed him down and diminished the results."

innovation, a narrative technique resulted that would be used by artists as disparate as George Pratt and Chester Brown.

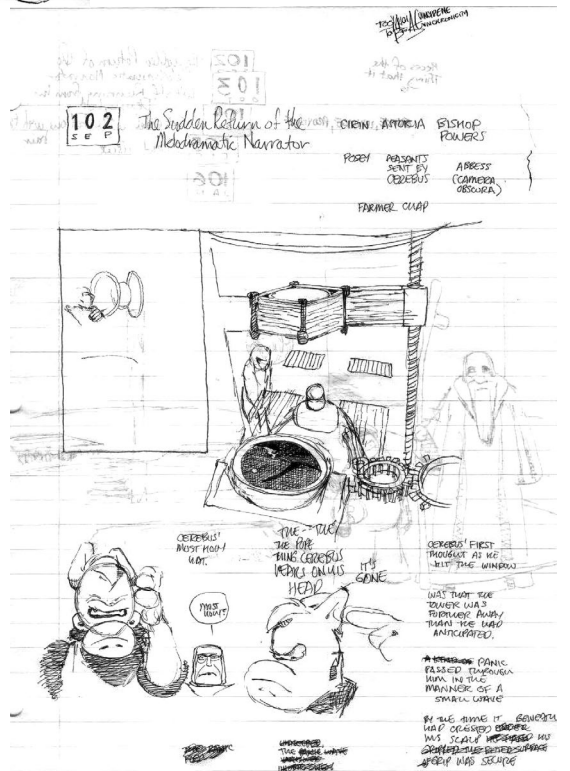
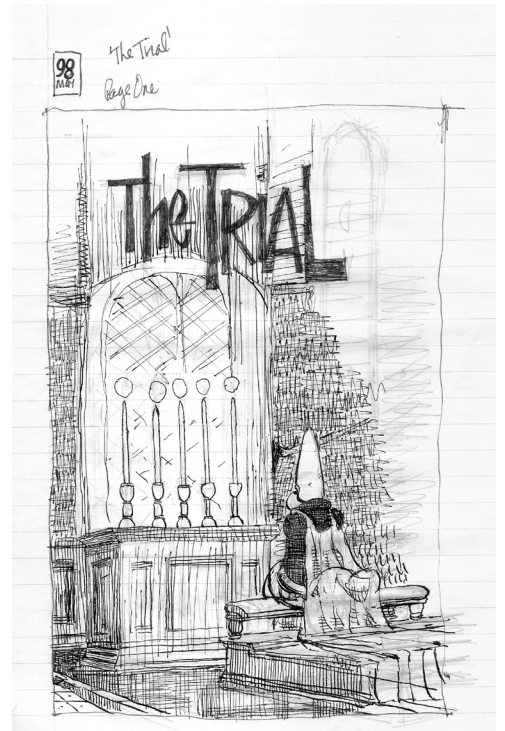
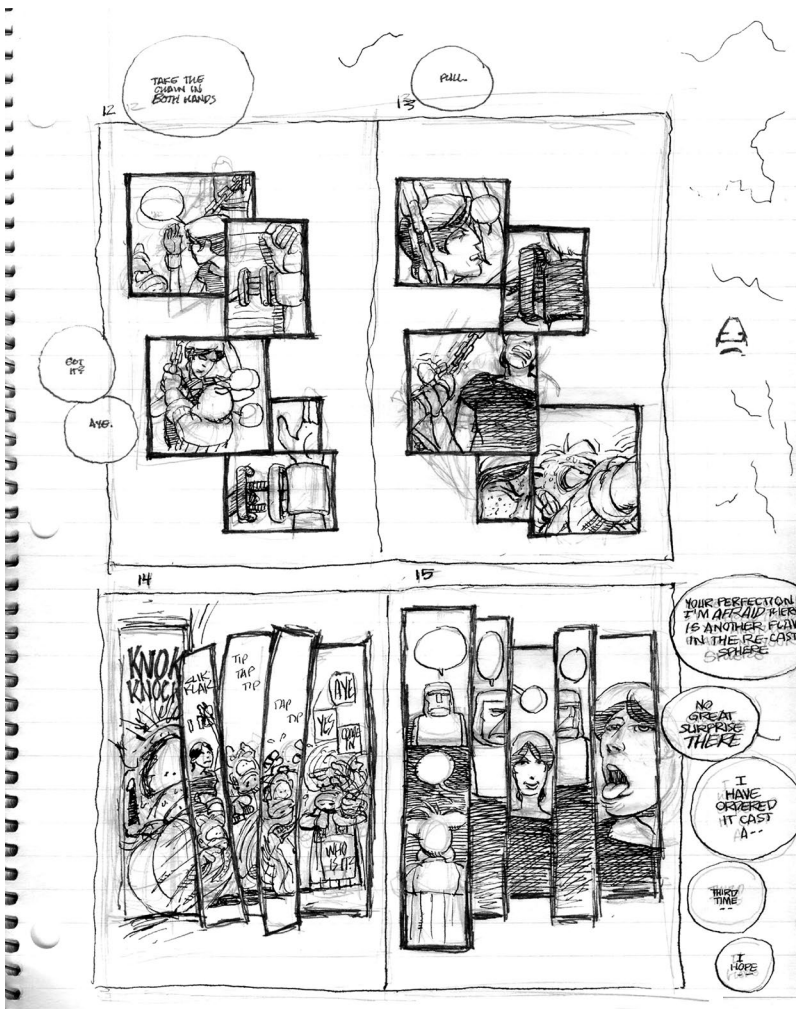
Are there resonant thematic reasons underpinning these decisions? Or are they simply show-offy moves, a master cartoonist flamboyantly manipulating the page? Like the evaluation of any complex piece of art, I'd say the predispositions of the reader, and their patience, has a lot to do with each individual answer.

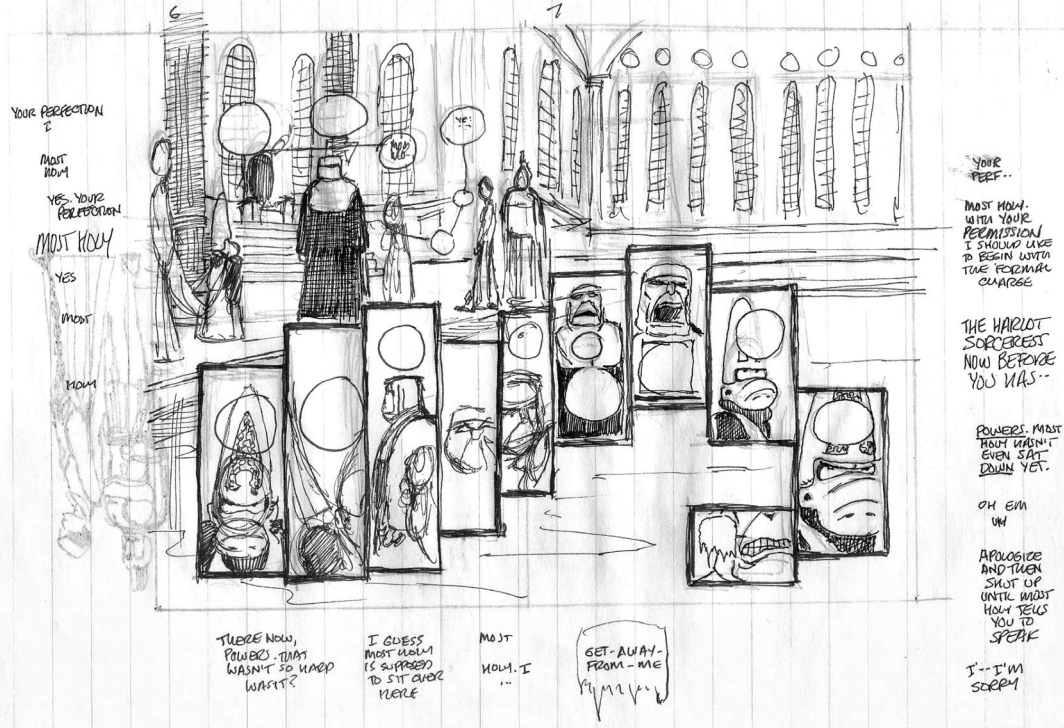
Many of these innovations in art production weren't consequence-free. *Cerebus*, both the monthly title and the trade paperbacks, were printed on highly porous newsprint, which made a high degree of fill-in inevitable, a problem exacerbated by the dense black of the print. Panels featuring photocopies, or panels that used particularly dense or fine cross-hatching, or small, dense tone, were even more sensitive to fill-in, oftentimes leaving what was a carefully-rendered, nuanced "gray" value on the art board to settle into a middle-value mud on the printed page. To make matters more complicated, the production staff at the printer sometimes (but not always, and certainly not consistently) masked off the *Cerebus* figures in the initial negative photography, and exposed them differently from the rest of the page,

lightening up the tone in these areas, sometimes blowing out the hatching lines on the figures, and thus irrevocably changing the tonal composition of the page.

These issues have been addressed in this printing by going back to the source. The art is presented here for the first time in remastered form: painstakingly restored page-by-page from hundreds of pages of original artwork, with the original photo negatives filling in the gaps, revealing astounding detail never before present outside of the original art itself. The carefully-textured, detail-rich line work is now on full display for the first time, including delicate line work, slashing brush lines alongside organic texture and spatter, and some of the most sophisticated pen and ink rendering to be created this side of World War II.

For all of the advantages of working directly from the original art, there were some serious disadvantages as well. The largest areas of screen tone and border tape have shrunk in the thirty-or-so years since the artwork was originally drawn, and the missing or moved areas had to be digitally cleaned or cloned to be restored to their original position. In many cases the photocopied portions of pages were also replaced by digitally-cloned sections of the original art, eliminating the fill-in and





washed-out blacks of the photocopies themselves. Lastly, special attention was given to preserving some of the more unusual layout choices on the original art boards, some of which had been “corrected” away in previous printings. (Page 714 is a not-so-subtle example). Lastly, the book was proofread by detail-spotter extraordinaire Jeff Seiler, who flagged several inconsistencies and readability issues in the text, which were evaluated and corrected by myself on a case-by-case basis. All told, this printing represents hundreds of hours of work by myself, Jeff, and Mara Sedlins, who executed much of the cleanup.

Having spent the majority of this essay avoiding summary and “hey! Look at that cool thing you never noticed about the story!”, I hope you’ll indulge me as I point out a few *Church and State* topics that deserve further pondering.

The “roles” of the various players throughout the book, as relates to the in-book card game *Diamondback*, made explicit by the characters at several points in the story (and not unrelated to the tarot). Glazed atop that, the second diagetic layer of the roles that specific characters *find themselves* cast in, seemingly against their will, both before and after the trial, and by what method those characters are able to break that seemingly inevitable “echo”. (In the case of *Church & State*, it’s Cerebus who is able to “escape”. When the ascension repeats itself mid-way through *Reads*, it will be someone else). The roles that various characters *wish* themselves to inhabit, or have ambitions for: the “messiah craze” (as the moment of ascension approaches) being the most *obvious*—but not *sole*—example. The other pairings of echoes less explicitly present in the narrative: specifically, those related to the Judge’s cosmic founding

story. Never mind the host of other “whodunit”-type details left seemingly unresolved in the text. In my estimation, these are features, not bugs, the result of an authorial voice which presents, which entertains, which provokes, which challenges, but does not always explicate.

About explication. About that ending.

After the Judge’s monologue on human nature and celestial climax, what do we have? Cerebus, returning to the very place he left, to find the destruction of the hotel, the tower collapsed, the crowds of worshippers dissipated, the very street cracked and pocked from his slaying of the “false pope” (now, inexplicably, absent).

When Cerebus throws the baby off the steps and into the crowd; when he terrorizes the whole of the city; when he rapes Astoria; it’s not clear that consequences, repercussions, are coming. The last few pages of *Church and State*, and indeed the 40-page coda that is the uncollected *Cerebus* No. 112/113, is a reminder that those repercussions are real, that consequences are real, even if delayed, or diffuse.

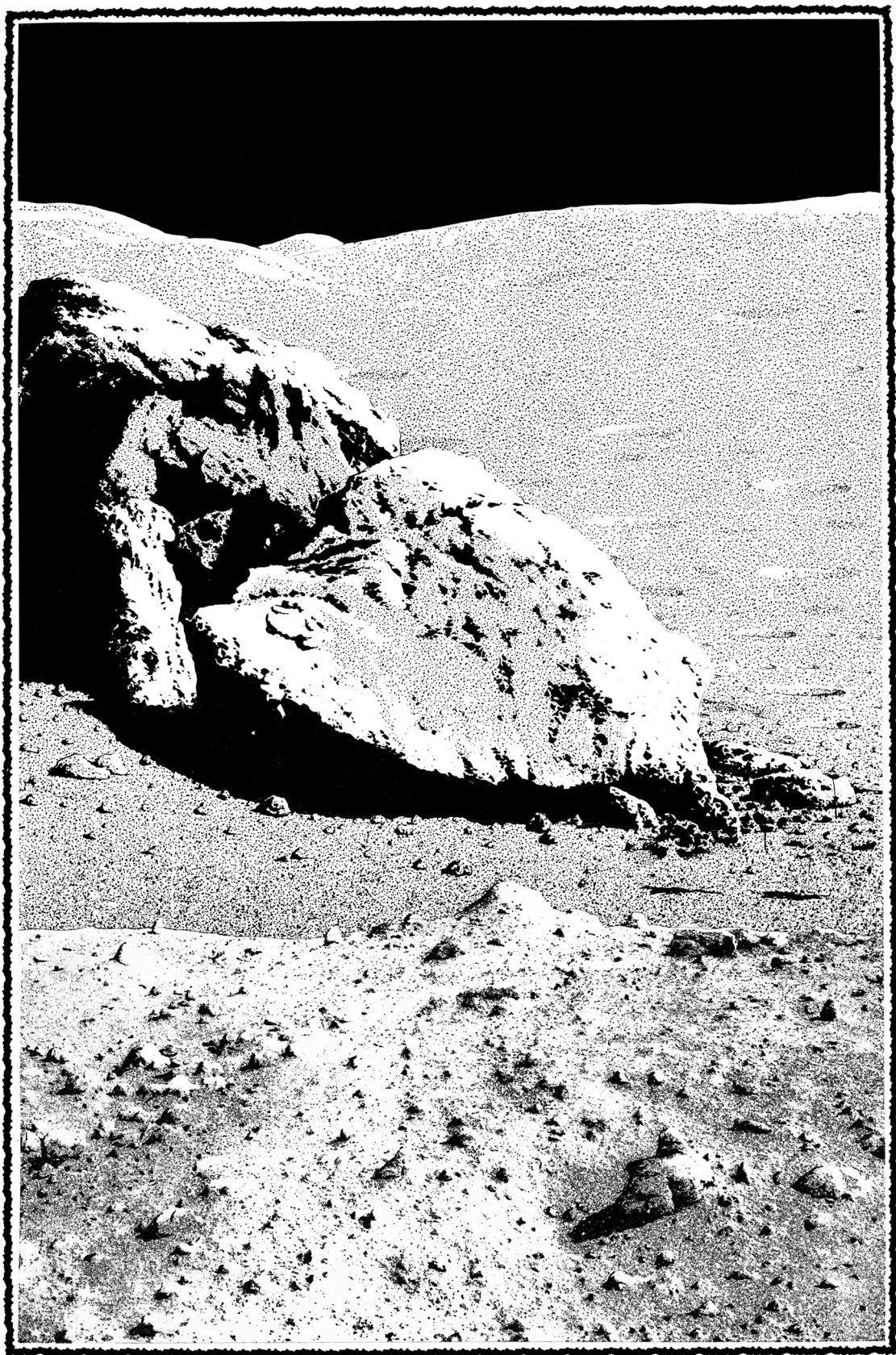
He returns to his comeuppance.

Which, it has to be said, is coming to all of us but the most fortunate few who seem truly immune to the consequences of our actions.

In this life, anyway.

— Sean Michael Robinson, August 2019

facing page— Another unidentified and unused illustration, this one most likely used as a “proof of concept” for several different ways to tackle the rendering on the lunar surface. The background is rendered primarily with a stipple Letratone and light amounts of hatching, the middle ground with tone layered with spatter, and the foreground solely with spatter and mild amounts of brush, which ended up being the final solution for the finished pages. Sim (using his Mick voice) chimes in at the top of the image in blue pencil. “‘Fucking’ gri’e”





above— Sources. The top image is from the ninth printing of *Church & State II*. The image below is newly-restored directly from the original art board.

CEREBUS ORIGINAL ART DRAGNET CONTRIBUTORS

In preparing this new edition, we are indebted to the generous Cerebus art collectors who scanned their artwork to contribute to the project. To contribute your own original artwork to the Cerebus Archive, please contact Sean at cerebusarthunt@gmail.com. Dave has created a finder's certificate that will be sent to every contributor for each page contributed to the art hunt, as well as to anyone sending a lead that results in the netting of a new page.

Jason Crosby, Comic Link –

pg. (Cerebus no. 105 pg. 09)

Dan Parker –

pg. (Cerebus no. 107 pg. 07)

James Guarnotta –

pg. (Cerebus no. 81 pg. 06)

Dean Reeves –

pg. (Cerebus no. 102 pg. 06)

Dagon James –

pg. (Cerebus no. 103 pg. 06)

pg. (Cerebus no. 102 pg. 07)

pg. (Cerebus no. 103 pg. 07)

pg. (Cerebus no. 104 pg. 14)

(Cerebus no. 106 pg. 19)

Chris Johnson –

pg. (Cerebus no. 84 pg. 02)

Oystein Sorensen –

pg. (Cerebus no. 102 pg. 09)

Gregory Kessler –

pg. (Cerebus no. 84 pg. 17)

CEREBUS BIRTHDAY CARD No. 1 CONTRIBUTORS

We are indebted to our patrons, Cerebus Kickstarter contributors past and present, who continue to make this project possible. Our many thanks! Contributors to the Cerebus Birthday Card No. 1 Kickstarter are listed below.

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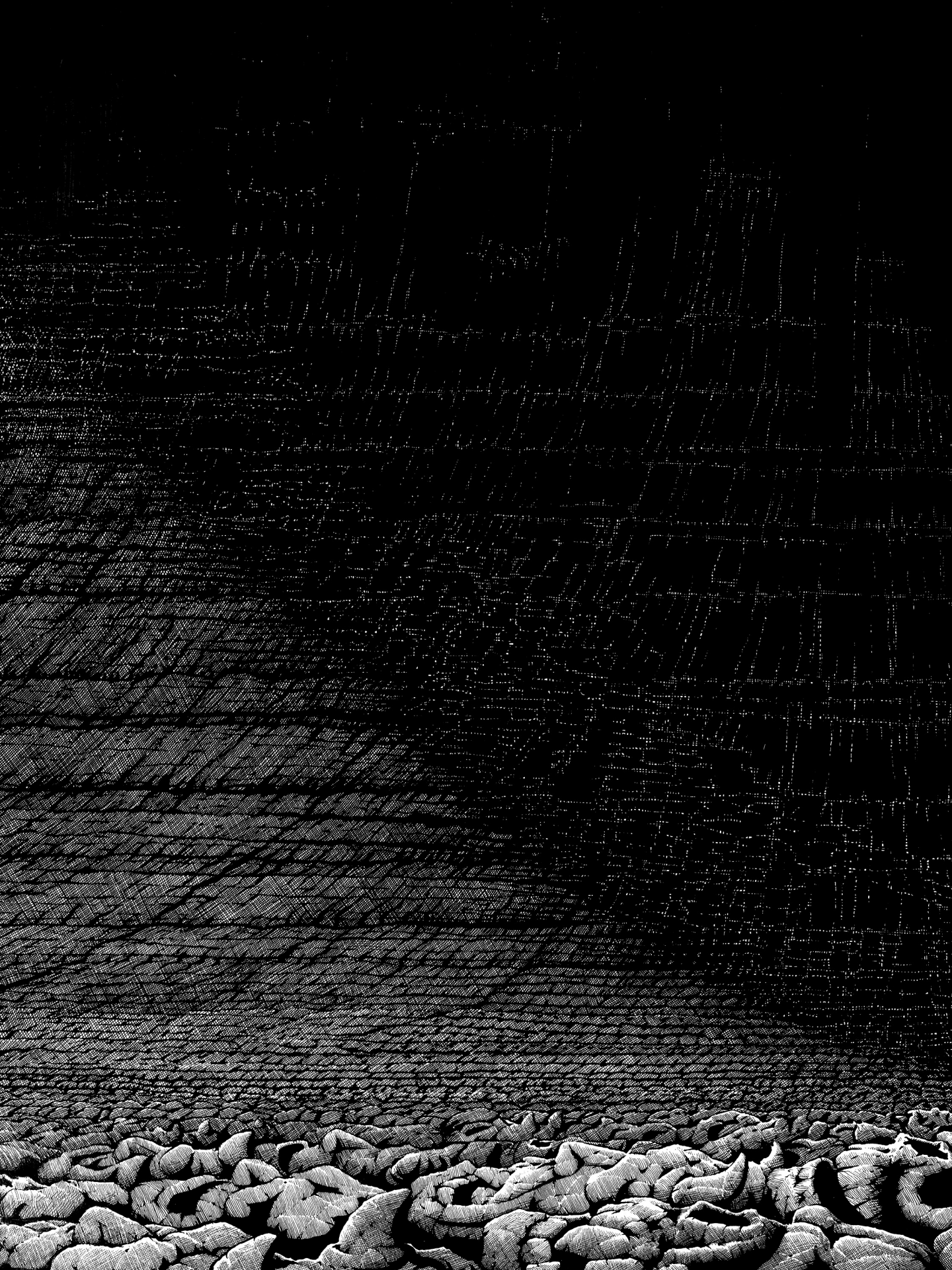
A hearty thank you to the Church and State II “tone team”, Bill Halliar II, Margaret Liss, Dean Reeves, Joeseeph Simon, and Rebekah Turner. Their tremendous Photoshop skills brought new life to several pages from multi-generational sources.

Special thanks to Jeff Seiler and Eddie Khanna for their detailed proofreading, Margaret Liss for always being there with an answer, and Tim F. for his continued patronage and support.



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Church State

volume II

DAVE SIM & GERHARD

